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The Waldenses,

OR

THE FALL OF RORA:

A LYRICAL SKETCH.

WITH OTHER POEMS.

BY

AUBREY DE VERE.

OXFORD,

JOHN HENRY PARKER:

RIVINGTONS, LONDON.

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TO

THE ASTRONOMER ROYAL

FOR IRELAND,

SIR WILLIAM ROWAN HAMILTON.

My dear Sir William,

I am acquainted with no one who will condemn the many defects of this Book more gently than yourself: no one who will find out its merits, if it has any, with a more friendly penetration.

Permit me then to connect the following Poems with your name. Many of them are on subjects often discussed by us of old. To those conversations I owe much on many accounts: but I value them chiefly as associated with a friendship which will endure when this Book has been forgotten, both by you and your very affectionate and faithful friend,

AUBREY DE VERE.

July 29th, 1842.

INTRODUCTION.

Of all the persecutions endured by the Waldenses, persecutions scarcely equalled in cruelty, repeated from age to age, and lamented alike by Roman Catholic and Protestant historians, there was none which exceeded in atrocity that which took place in the year 1655. For us the memory of it is for ever preserved by Milton's celebrated Sonnet.

The Marquis of Pianessa, commander of the Duke of Savoy's forces, entered the mountain district with a large army, and feigning a wish for conciliation invited deputies to confer with him. These deputies he treated with much kindness; and granted peace on condition of the mountaineers receiving some troops in their villages as a pledge of loyalty. Immediately afterwards he sent into the valleys his lieutenants Mario and Count Christovel, at the same time informing the indignant peasants that those officers had advanced without his orders and would be at once recalled. The valour of the mountaineers and the skill of their leader Gianavello was for a considerable time successful. Mario and Christovel sustained three different defeats

in the course of three days, being routed with great slaughter successively at Burner, Villaro, and Peyro Capello. The Marquis then marched forward with his whole army; and bursting into the valley of Rora, burned the town, and put all the inhabitants to the sword with the exception of a few prisoners.

It is hardly worth observing that the Waldenses of Piedmont, whose origin is lost in the gloom of antiquity, are not to be confounded with the reformers of the same name, so called from their master Peter Valdo—much less with those heretical Albigenses and Cathari who seem to have revived some of the most fanatical errors of the East. The Waldenses, it is true, appear to have been defective, at least at a late period, in matters relating to Church government. Such defects it would be but a very false charity to make little of or to overlook. On the other hand it would be at once presumptuous and unjust to attribute to the Waldenses as a fault that which may have been, however great a misfortune, still a misfortune only. For the early Waldenses, occupying a few secluded valleys among the mountains, and surrounded from generation to generation by pitiless foes, may be urged that excuse which our great Divines used to make for the reformed religious bodies of Germany, viz., that if they had not Bishops it was because they could not have them. No generous and truly Catholic heart will forget, because a certain gift was withheld from the Waldenses, the religious and heroic

fidelity with which they preserved and vindicated the gifts committed to their charge: no man with the ordinary feelings of humanity can ever cease to sympathize with the brave defenders of their ancestral Faith, and immemorial Freedom.

In conclusion I would observe, that the present poem, although a large part of it is cast in the form of dialogue, has no pretensions whatever to be considered a Drama. It is, in truth, what its name asserts, a "Lyrical Sketch," with a few dramatic scenes interspersed, as the simplest mode of describing the character of the Waldenses, and illustrating their sufferings.

CONTENTS.

Page

THE WALDENSES, or the Fall of Rora : a Lyrical Sketch . . 1

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

Translation from the Prophet Micah. Chap. vi. 95
To a Boy in the Choir of Christ Church 97
The Planets 100
The Moralist and Religionist 107
St. Mary Magdalene 109
Adam refuses the Presents of the Evil Race 111
Fragments on Truth.—The Search 114
——————————— Novelty and Practical Unbelief . . . 115
——————————— Unity of Objective Truth 116
Archbishop Leighton 117
Spiritual Guidance 119
Association of Ideas 121
We seek; but find not: be it so. 122
Love thy God, and love Him only: 122
Angel! beneath whose steadfast wings 123
Humanity 124
To ———. 125
Religious Hypochondria 126
Liberalism 127
Law and Grace 128
To ———. 129
Imitated from Prudentius 130
Power to forego, and seek for pleasure, ... 130
An Epitaph 131
Alms 131

Page

Inscriptions for Way-side Fountains and Oratories . . . 132
Rites and Ceremonies 134
The Rainbow 135
A Traveller's Grace 135
Death 136
Songs.—Her sable tresses swelled more bright 138
——— Within the crowded fane she knelt 139
——— St. Cecilia's song 140
——— Martha and Mary 141
——— Christian Chivalry 142
——— Go, put the shoes from off thy feet 143
——— Our vale of Life at either end 144
——— Against my cheek a breath was playing, ... 144
——— For the Feast of the Purification 145

Hymns for the Canonical Hours.—For Noon 148
——— For Three p. m.—Peace . . 150
——— For Six p. m. 151
——— For Nine p. m. 152
——— For Midnight 153
——— For Three a. m. 155
——— For Six a. m.—Christ our Example 157
——— For Nine a. m.—To the Spirit . 158

Hymns.—For the Feast of the Holy Innocents 159
——— To the Meek 161
——— For the Feast of the Annunciation 169
——— For the Building of a Cottage 172
——— For Good Friday 178
——— For Easter Saturday 181
——— Self-sacrifice 182

Queen Bertha at her Vespers 184
Queen Bertha's Vigil 186
Queen Bertha's Alms 188
Queen Bertha's Matin Song 190
A Tale of the Modern Time 193
The Nun 207
Epitaph 209
The Ascetic 210
The Infant Bridal 213
King Henry II. at the Tomb of King Arthur 225

SONNETS.

Page

Love to the tender ; Peace to those who mourn ; 235
Law and Grace 236
Law and Anarchy 237
Churches 238
Ye praise the humble : of the meek ye say, ... 239
That depth of love the Church doth bear to thee 240
Be still, ye Senates : hear, and God will speak. 241
The Vastness of the Gospel lost in its Simplicity 242
A Church-yard. I. 243
A Church-yard. II. 244
Fame 245
Felicitas at her Martyrdom 246
Faith, Hope, and Charity 247
To a Just Lawyer 248
Blessed is he who hath not trod the ways 249
Evidences of Religion. I. 250
Evidences of Religion. II. 251
The golden fruits of Earth's autumnal store 252
To ———. 253
Form of Consecration for a new House 254
On Earth, as it is in Heaven 255
A Sermon 256
"The Flesh is weak" 257
The Alexandrian Version of the Scriptures 258
On reading the "Mores Catholici" 259
Now, now, ye kings and rulers of the earth, ... 260
Simplicity and Steadfastness of Mind 261
The Spiritual Ties symbolized through the Natural . . . 262
Penitence 263
Discipline of the Church. (Penitential I.) 264
Discipline of the Church. (Penitential II.) 265
The Church persecuted 266
Magdalene 267
On a Picture of the Magdalene 268
Discipline of the Church. (Commemorative.) 269
The "Rectory of Valehead" 270
The Beatific Vision of the Earth. I. 271
The Beatific Vision of the Earth. II. 272
The Beatific Vision of the Earth. III. 273
Merit 274
Good Works 275

Page

Moral application of Miracles 276
To ———. 277
The Constellation of the Plough 278
Natural Religion 279
It was not with your gold, or with your merit, ... 280
The "Golden Grove" 281
The Dying Platonist 282
Initiative Faith 283
Conversion 284
The Communion of Saints 285
Sad is our youth, for it is ever going, ... 286
Constancy of Character 287
On hearing the English Liturgy at Rome 288
Worship of the Blessed Virgin 289
Ritual Excess 290
A Romanist's Question answered 291
The Papal Empire 292
Reply of the Anchoret when the British Bishops demanded how they were to receive the pretensions of Augustine 293
Rationalism 294
Sorrow 295
Meditation 296
O that to every cottage hearth were brought 297
Nature and Grace 298
Virgin! at placid morn, and when the airs 299
Providence is that thread on which are strung 300
Universal History 301
Truth 302
Frescoes by Masaccio 303
Why make ye thus your boast, O mortal Nations? 304
National Strength 305
To Honour 306

The Waldenses;

OR

THE FALL OF RORA.

A LYRICAL SKETCH.

Dramatis Personæ.

MEN.

A CARDINAL.
ABBOT OF RORA.
PIANESSA, (the Commander of the Duke of Savoy's forces.)
CAPTAIN OF THE DUKE'S FORCE AT RORA.
ARNOLD, (a Waldensian Chieftain of ancient race.)
GIANAVELLO, (a leader of the Waldensians.)
OLD MAN, (Gianavello's father.)
SHEPHERDS.
TWO BOYS, (children of Marguerita.)

WOMEN.

GIANAVELLO'S WIFE.
MARGUERITA, (his sister.)
ANGELA, (his daughter.)
HERMIA, (Marguerita's daughter.)
AGNES, (daughter of Arnold.)

CHORUS, (consisting of Waldensian peasants.)

SCENE—The Valley of Rora.

TIME—Three Days.

ACT I.—SCENE 1.

A PLATFORM OF ROCK COVERED WITH PINES.

Chorus.

A MORNING HYMN.

The sun is rising, though from us,
His orb the mountain cliffs are veiling;
Quick lights shoot forward tremulous;
Long gleams athwart the dark are sailing.

The clouds are thrilled, the clouds are filled,
The clouds with light are overflowing—
The pinesteeps now, their murmurs stilled,
From ridge to ridge high up are glowing.

Now dim no more, the mountain slopes
With carved and trelliced huts are spangled;
While up from every vapoury copse
Rises its cloudwreath disentangled.

O Heavenly uncreated Light!
Thus greet us from thy loftier station;
Till we are bright, and wholly bright,
In act, and will, as Aspiration!

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Hark! hark! a sound far down amid the darkness!
It spreads; no, no, that sound is but the echo:
Along the right side of the glen it peals,
Louder, and louder.

SECOND SHEPHERD.

Mark! lance, sword, and helm,
Flash up like rippling waters! What are these?
They bear no banner, and their palfreys strike
Their iron hoofs against the musical rocks
More proudly than our light-limbed mountain mules.

MARGUERITA.

Heralds of peace, though clad in warlike guise.
Lo there the cross! Pianessa, the Duke's captain
Has promised peace; and I remember now
Men spake of some great Prelate of the Church,
(A man for wisdom famed and life severe)
Whose intercession should compose our strifes,
And make the mountain-land to breathe again.

SHEPHERDS.

God give him strength for that good work!

MARGUERITA.

Amen.
If the worst come we can but die.

SHEPHERDS.

The worst!
The best hath come.

MARGUERITA.

For us all things are best.

SCENE 2.

Cardinal, Attendants, and Abbot of Rora, ascending a glen.

ABBOT.

May it please your Grace to throw this mantle round you.
You are not wont, my Lord—

CARDINAL.

What am I better
Than any the poorest lackey in my train!
Give it, good friend, to him that needs it most.

ABBOT (*aside.*)

As if he wore no purple—Hypocrite!

(*To his servant.*)

Good friend, have thou this cloak—(*aside*) And if he takes it
The worse for him the longest day he lives.

CARDINAL.

After long buffeting with this stormy night,
Methinks our hermitage is reached at last:
We lack but eagle-wings—Is that your convent?
High up, mile high, it hangs beneath that cloud.
Let us rest here—but no—On, on.

ABBOT.

My Lord,
These are the sorceries of the mountain air.
That convent, with its turrets and bright spires,
Is but a rock! Good speed for me in sooth
Were I but Lord of such a girth of towers!
Our shelter is hard by.

CARDINAL.

My eyes are dim.
No wonder—many vigils they have kept,
Seen many sorrows.

ABBOT.

Nay, my Lord, myself—

CARDINAL.

These be God's wonders in that mighty deep
Whose waves are mountains! Fifty years ago
Such scenes had pleased me: now, this icy wind
Mocks my grey hairs.

ABBOT.

My Lord, you look exhausted.

CARDINAL.

Verily wearied. Blessed are those limbs
That ne'er grow weary in their Maker's service;
And move not in their own. This cloud-heaped tempest
Roars like a river down yon dim ravine.
See you, those pines are tortured by the storms
To shapes more gnarled than their roots—fantastic
As are the thoughts of some arch-heretic,
That have no end—aye, self-entangling snares—
Nets for the fowls of air—'Tis cold, 'tis cold.

ABBOT.

He slumbers. Wake, my Lord, I pray you wake.
Here sleep is death.

CARDINAL.

Ay, here and everywhere.
On, on, we must not sleep. Said you not, Abbot,
The shepherds that abide in these rude glens
Love them?

ABBOT.

As their own souls.

CARDINAL.

'Tis marvellous.
There is no bounty of the earth, or grace
Of Heaven in dreary solitudes like these.
A Church itself on that great promontory,
A Metropolitan Church, were nothing; nothing
The blessed sounds of holy men at prayer
'Mid those wild winds; incense were lost in them!
Hold you not with me, Abbot, those poor peasants
Have much excuse—God look on them with mercy!—
Have much excuse for their stiff-neckedness,
And hardness of their hearts? The reverent grace
Of Order, the proportionable Beauty
Of mighty Structures, whereof every part
Both props and is in turn subordinate
To others; multiform variety—
With unity—true balance kept in all—
And, high o'er all, one bright and starlike Power,
Whose orb lifts up the tides of mortal fates—
Ah! what acceptance can such fabrics find
In wilds like these, which Nature's self abandons,
Breaking her sceptre? Truly, reverend Abbot,
Yourself methinks treading these desolate tracts,
Have found your holy hymns, the long way's solace,
Hurled by those streams to more precipitous measures
Than the Church uses.

ABBOT.

Please your Grace, those hinds
By you so pitied are most proud and stubborn.
They love their valleys as the beasts their caves,
And think that truth nowhere more flourishes
Than where the pines lack sustenance. Doctrines they have

Of luxury in cities—and such fancies—
In fine, they are contented (so to speak)
Except in this their churlish discontent
At all things that are named of God: their pride
Consumes them.

CARDINAL.

Worser plague than storm or mountains!
The deeper be our prayer on their behalf—
Abbot, What smoke is that?

ABBOT.

We are arrived:
This is our convent: here your Grace shall rest.

CARDINAL.

Nay, friend, not yet—that chieftain's tower you named,
Stands it not nigh?

ABBOT.

My Lord, it is not far.

CARDINAL.

Then I must forward.

ABBOT.

My Lord, 'twere better done
He wait upon your Grace.

CARDINAL.

Not so, not so.
First let him learn the Church's sov'reign meekness,
And after that, her might. Moreover, friend,
I will not give him time to shape his answers.

SCENE 3.

ARNOLD'S TOWER.

Cardinal and Arnold.

CARDINAL.

Arnold! my zeal, and that great charity
Which warms me ever for the Church's welfare,
Not these alone have brought me hither. Oft
Have I heard mention of your name, your worth,
Your grey-haired wisdom, and religious prudence,
(That which in reverence ever meekly bows
To Ordinance established of God's worship;
And no less to the Lords terrestrial,
Princes, and Potentates, and Secular Powers.)
These qualities in you, and the authority
Your birth has given you with those petulant boors,
Have brought me hither, so to serve the Church,
As shall not do disservice to a man
Who merits better fortunes. My friend Arnold
Should not be yokemate to a tottering cause.

ARNOLD.

Lord Cardinal! What would you in these vales,
And in this hut, my father's house and mine,
With Arnold Wilfred?

CARDINAL.

Nay, you chafe! methinks
This purple might protect me from the wrath
Of one who with instinctive courtesy
Should bow in loyalty to men of reverence.

ARNOLD.

To Princes of just title, though but infants ;
To Priests, to women, to the poor ; to all
Who, seeming feeble, yet through God are strong ;
This head, in loyalty and all true service
Bows, and shall ever bow. Lord Cardinal,
If you are God's true servant, I am yours.

CARDINAL.

You have well guessed, I would you had well judged
My purpose. Use your power among the people
Their rage to put away, and to unbend
Their brows long bent like bows against things sacred.
This do and thou art wise.

ARNOLD.

Have you said all?

CARDINAL.

The sum of all, and briefly, without art ;
(Knowing that such as you desire few words ;)
And I rejoice your ill-timed heat has left you.

ARNOLD.

Then hear me, Cardinal. I have no power.
Whatever power God hath in me, and uses
Through me—my heart, my brain, my lips, my hands,
Must so be wielded as shall most conduce
To His true glory and His people's good.

CARDINAL.

What counsel will you give the people?

ARNOLD.

None,
Unless they ask it ; if they ask it, this :
To love peace well ; but not to love it better
Than that which is its sanction and its end,

Free worship, and pure worship of their God ;
Neither to trample, nor be trampled on ;
And to be wakeful in remembering ever
Their Maker first, and next, their Prince.

CARDINAL.

Well spoken !
Arnold, you should be with us : you might do
To us much good, and haply teach us somewhat ;
And one thing you perchance might learn of us.
See that you be not, like young Orators,
The dupes of your own words.
There are things we should do, but do in silence ;
And there are things well said, but weakly done.
Speak to the people bravely ; having spoken,
Take by the hand a man or two of them,
And say to them, " The time is not yet come :"
Or, " Asking less we shall obtain the more :"
Or, " Seeking later we shall gain the sooner ;
" And in the mean time good men and their wives
" Must live." Authority thou hast : canst say
" Go," and he goeth ; " Come," and he shall come :
It needeth less to say " Go eat a morsel ;"
Or, " Sleep a little—for your country's sake."

ARNOLD.

I thought your craft was deeper ; thus I answer.
Yours is a worldling's wisdom, and not mine.

CARDINAL.

Briefly; what would you? 'tis in vain to strive
'Gainst force superior, and superior skill,
And will not less resolved. If you resist,
I will not say, you die : such threat were nothing—
But I will say, you fail.

ARNOLD.

How can men fail,
Who for the right contend, if God rules all things,
And man be mortal and immortal both?
Mortal—he melts beneath his chain, and cheats it;
Immortal—he shall find in heaven his praise.
Moreover, Prelate! Freedom, like man's soul,
And his Redeemer, through mysterious pains
Must be made perfect. Deserts she must tread,
Feed on strange fruits; drawing for aye from heaven
Unutterable strength into her heart.
These things are sure; and of things sure no less
Is this, Lord Cardinal—Man must live free.

CARDINAL.

Cato, and Brutus, and the Ephesian hero,
And all the like that e'er were sung or said,
Art thou—hadst thou a buskin thou wert perfect!

ARNOLD.

Whate'er I be, my good Lord Cardinal,
I am no scholar: but, if those you named
Lived and have died as freemen live and die,
Then neither were those men unmeet for song,
Nor song for them unmeet—if song like those
Which flush our children in their cheeks late pale,
And bear, like winds, our youth to victory;
And, like a breeze from our lost Paradise,
Lift up the wan locks of our aged men.

CARDINAL.

Ay, ay—your ballads, and your patriot psalms
And hymns, whereof the hearthstone is the altar;
And songs unwrit, that might be sung alike

At graves and bridals—these have done much harm:
Those men I named but now were such as you are,
Martyrs of freedom; men whose sole vocation
Was this, to wave a banner round their heads,
And rule large fields of empire—in the air:
A mighty tract, to which their children added
Such lands as they could tear from juster hands.

ARNOLD.

I pity men whose sons proved conquerors:
And those not less whose sires were visionaries.
True liberty should be a solid thing.

CARDINAL.

What means the word? Can men live solitary,
Or join save on conditions of obedience?
What! can you say to the earth that holds you down,
"Let me leap swiftly to yon mountain-top?"
Or to the sea, "How dar'st thou bar my way?"
Or to the hungry appetites, "Be still?"
Or to disease, "Prey but on worms?" Believe me,
If there be such a thing as Liberty,
Man was not made for it, nor it for man.

ARNOLD.

It was not made for men who scoff at liberty;
No, nor for freedom's sceptics; nor for those
Who seek it with ill passions, for ill ends:
Nor yet for those who know not why they seek it.
But it was made for man: yea, and for men.

CARDINAL.

Well then, what means that strange word, Liberty?

ARNOLD.

It means man's Duty so to tread the earth,
As one obedient to God's prime decree,

" Be thou the Lord of that fair world below :"
It means man's Duty so to gaze on heaven,
As one in whom some portion yet abides
Of that fair image which God made us in :
It means, that sacred ordonnance of life,
By which, in every order and degree,
There is made room for Virtue, and a place
Is shaped, and girt around, and consecrated,
For all the heart's affections rightly prized :
That there should be for all the moral powers
A sphere and exercise, for every hand
A salutary work and undefiling :
That there should be a bright flame on each hearth ;
And a frank converse ; that no specious lie
Should weaken or supplant the ties of life ;
Their duties sap, and thus destroy their sanction :
That there should come between the wife and husband,
The sire and son, no sacerdotal whisper.
It means that life, whate'er its woes, should have
Its dignities no less and its immunities :
And death no deeper shadow than the grave's.
All this that " strange word Liberty" doth mean :
Yea, and confers on man some part of this.

CARDINAL.

I am no orator, my good friend Arnold :
Nor have I more to say. Dreamers must dream :
Ay, and men reason subtilely in their sleep ;
But when they wake the ground of all that reasoning
Is vanished into air. Thy phantasies
May live thy life, and at thy death support thee,
But those thy friends are made of weaker stuff :
Soon as the hot fit of their ague leaves them

The cold fit will succeed it. When too late,
Repentance will be thine, to have lost all
For men by arms subdued, bought off by money,
Or by disunion—

ARNOLD.

Prelate! Peace, enough!
First fling thy mantle on the mountain torrents,
And bid them their swift course suspend; and then
Chain up the blood within the patriot's veins.
Melt with thy breath yon stagnant seas of ice,
And drown the vales—Try first this task! Strive lastly,
To tame with iron, or to melt with gold,
Our sons and us; to make the mountain spirits,
Which are as tempests, fawn upon your thrones!
Lord Cardinal, thou talkest without knowledge
Of men born free: this matter thou hast never
In order compassed, nor possessed this lore,
Which not 'mid councils nor in tomes is found;
Whose Scriptures on the tablets of the heart
Are graven, and whose rubrics writ in blood.
Thou! thou subdue this people, or corrupt!
On their graves thou may'st trample: not on them.

CARDINAL.

You will not be advised; and, pardon me,
I will not be converted; we must part.
Arnold, I do not scorn thee, no nor pity:
A better cause would better suit thy birth,
Perhaps thy talents—but I know not that.
Each man his own vocation hath, whereto
His talents easily conform themselves.
A spirit haughtier than the pride of birth,
Or genius, ay, or spiritual power,

Hath beckoned thee from out thy natural station;
And thou selected for the Chief must leave
Thy studious moods, and play thy part, and be
Deserted by thy friends; and praised—when dead.
Arnold, once more farewell—should you think better,
Acquaint me.

ARNOLD.

My Lord Cardinal, farewell. (*Cardinal departs.*)

ARNOLD. (*in soliloquy.*)

At Milan once I saw him: he was gazing
From off his palfrey at those half-raised spires:
O what a glory then was on his brow!
Time hath dealt hardly with him: Time deals hardly
With all that on the quicksands build of Time,
And worship Time's deceits. A wood in ruins,
Or tower looks older than heaven's vault eterne:
Thereat men stumble whom God formed to stand.—
His voice retains its sweetness; but his eye
Has lost its light.——
'Tis a hard bondage that—to be a tyrant;
It bends the stature of the lordliest soul:
It makes men like the slaves themselves have made.—
I much mistrust Pianessa's promised peace.
Why seeks he thus to draw me from my brethren?
Count Christovel was seen too—Gianavello
We must be up!

(*to an attendant.*)

Give me my staff, Ulrico,
I must to Gianavello ere 'tis night.

SCENE 4.

OLD MAN'S COTTAGE ON THE EDGE OF A MOUNTAIN LAWN.

Old Man, Marguerita, Gianavello's wife, Hermia, Angela, children.

CHILDREN SING.

1.

Sink beneath the glowing forest,
Golden sun; and thou, O Night,
Swiftly o'er our vale be borne!
Come, thou long-expected Morn,
Shine, O shine with triple light
(As above the hills thou soarest)
On our grandsire's snowy hairs.
That old head! how well it bears
Its burden of a hundred years!

2.

The birthday of our father's father
Is the birthday of us all!
Dance, and feast, and rural glee,
Come and grace our jubilee,
Haste and crown our festival!
Early we must rise, and gather
Mosses fine, and buds new-blown,
And flowers to deck the grassy throne
Raised in the midst for him alone!

FIRST CHILD.

Grandfather! know you not that Agnes comes
To shew high honour to our festival,
And share our gladness with us?

SECOND CHILD.

Hush, Giovanni!
The old man sleeps.

FIRST CHILD.

He sleeps not: know you not
His eyes close ever after gentle sounds,
And, as our infant after his sweet draught,
He sighs.

SECOND CHILD.

Who knows but he may never die!

OLD MAN.

Daughter, ere morning see thou clip these vines;
They hide the psalms, and all our carven prayers
Below the eaves—my grandfather (I know not
If I have told you, children) being blind
In his old age, yet day by day wrought out
Those carven traceries for his latticed cot—
It pleased him, it consoled him. Still a youth
In Pra del Tor, our venerable college,
He learned the psalms by heart, and Testament,
And half the "Nobla Leycon." I remember,
When I, a child, oft marvelled at his labour,
The old man answered, "Child, when I am gone,
"The winds of morn, and midnight winds shall sweep
"Athwart this carven fretwork; they shall sing

" These hymns and psalms—henceforth our cottage, child,
" Shall be an Instrument, sounding God's praise."

FIRST CHILD.

Yes, grandfather, you told us many times
That tale.

SECOND CHILD.

Giovanni, not so many times!

GIANAVELLO'S WIFE.

Run children, quick, and bring the pruning knife.

(*The children go.*)

FIRST CHILD.

How pretty is that tale he tells us!—think you
He made it all himself?

SECOND CHILD.

Nay nay; 'tis true.

FIRST CHILD.

How true? from first to last?

SECOND CHILD.

No doubt it is.

FIRST CHILD.

Think you the old man had a grandfather?

SECOND CHILD.

He had; all men that live had grandfathers.

FIRST CHILD.

Just as we children?

SECOND CHILD.

Yes.

FIRST CHILD.

What colour, think you,
Was then that other grandfather's old hair?

SECOND CHILD.

'Twas white.

FIRST CHILD.

It must have been a wondrous white.

MARGUERITA. (*Alone.*)

O! how I love those children! true it is
We are one fold, one family; and yet
I love my brother's children; love them dearly—
And yet, O how much more I love my own.
I often think if God should take them from me,—
But no—that cannot be—or else, should God
Take me from them—what then?—God's will be done!
Ah! there is mixed a bitter with this life
That glides beneath the sweetness; something cold
Under the warm stream. We must trust in God.
Who calls me?

CHILDREN.

Mother, come.

MARGUERITA.

You run too fast:
Those rocks are perilous.

CHILDREN.

Mother, come; he calls.

OLD MAN.

Know you, my child, where went your brother?

MARGUERITA.

Father,
I knew not he was gone.

GIANAVELLO'S WIFE.

Yes, he went forth
With Arnold not an hour ago.

OLD MAN.

'Tis strange
He hid his counsel thus: a time there was
When in these valleys whatsoe'er was done
Had need of my allowance.—Hark, that sound!

HERMIA.

Hark! hark below! hear you not sound of voices,
And light steps climbing hurriedly the rocks?
These are the youthful hunters back returning.
One of them promised—ah! they come too slowly.

ANGELA.

Too slowly for your father to be with them?

HERMIA.

Is he gone forth?

ANGELA.

Heard you not what they said?

HERMIA.

Hark! hark, those sounds—how the caves echo them!

Shepherd Youths from below singing.

1.

Sing the old song, amid the sounds dispersing
That burden treasured in your hearts too long;
Sing it with voice low breathed, but never name her.
She will not hear you, in her turrets' nursing
High thoughts, too high to mate with mortal song—
Bend o'er her, gentle Heaven, but do not claim her!

2.

In twilight caves, and secret lonelinesses,
She shades the bloom of her unearthly days;
And the soft winds alone have power to woo her:
Far off we catch the dark gleam of her tresses;
And wild birds haunt the wood-walks where she strays,
Intelligible music warbling to her.

3.

That spirit charged to follow and defend her,
He also, doubtless, suffers this love-pain;
And she perhaps is sad, hearing his sighing.
And yet that face is not so sad as tender;
Like some sweet singer's when her sweetest strain
From the heaved heart is gradually dying!

ANGELA.

'Tis strange how all the young men of this valley
Do love our Agnes.

HERMIA.

No, not all of them.

ANGELA.

Nay, 'tis not strange, she is so good, so beautiful;
She wove me all this netting for my hair
Herself. At each hearth dear she is as though
She stood godmother to its youngest child!
And yet who knows but in some other valley,
Some other maid is loved as she is here.

HERMIA.

Impossible!

ANGELA.

Why laugh you? many youths
In this our valley love our Agnes dearly

As their own sisters and their mothers too:
As well, and better: yes, and some there be
That never saw her, yet—O Hermia, think!
What if one day we too should fall in love?

HERMIA.

Nay, nay, that were a sport too frivolous:
Better be loved than love.

ANGELA.

I think not so.

GIANAVELLO'S WIFE.

Children, since Agnes to her house has bid you,
'Tis time to go; the sun will soon be set.

OLD MAN.

The sun is setting—let him shine awhile
On those thin lids, and falling silver hairs—

(*A pause—opens his eyes.*)

He's gone—what weight is this upon my heart?
My children, are ye near me? nay, play on—
Bid them play on—'tis God that makes them play.
I would that all the men upon the earth
Were as these children! I do much misdoubt.—
Thou that hast shaped those vales, and with Thy spirit
Dost fill them, hallowing them in gentleness
For a pure worship and true love of Thee,
O guard them ever.
Peace, peace, my soul! peace is the end of all;
And they who live in God, live in the stillness
Of Him who is the end and prime of all.
We do but dream.—Children, how cold 'tis grown.

(*Children sing the Vesper Hymn.*)

The lights o'er yonder snowy range,
Shine yet, intense and tender;
Or, slowly passing, only change
From splendour on to splendour.

Before the dying eyes of Day
Immortal visions wander;
Dreams prescient of a purer ray
And morn spread still beyond her.

Lo! heavenward now those gleams expire,
In heavenly melancholy;
The barrier mountains, peak and spire,
Relinquishing them slowly.

Thus shine, O God! our mortal powers,
While grief and joy refine them—
And when in death they fade, be ours
Thus gently to resign them!

(*Old Man blesses them, and they enter the house.*)

SCENE 6.

Abbot, Cardinal, at a window in the Abbey.

ABBOT.

Nay, nay, my Lord, we part not yet: as yet
You scarce have rested.

CARDINAL.

In those two hours' space
I have compressed the deep sleep of two nights.
I would Pianessa had been here.

ABBOT.

He dares not
Without his army.

CARDINAL.

Wherefore?

ABBOT.

All men hate him.

CARDINAL.

This mountain fierceness he should soothe or trample—
Why brings he not his force?

ABBOT.

The Marquis promised,
Soon as the strongest villages received
Some scattered troops in pledge of loyalty,
Himself to keep aloof.

CARDINAL.

From which time forth,
There hath been nought, you say, but strife and bloodshed.

ABBOT.

Yes, my Lord, somewhat more.

CARDINAL.

What more?

ABBOT.

A plot,
But now discovered, to exterminate
The Faith among these vales—to massacre
All Catholics! to burn our convent down.

CARDINAL.

There is no end of tales like these; no doubt
The half of them are fancies!

ABBOT.

Nay, your pardon!
The rancour of these men makes all things possible.

CARDINAL.

All heretics—

ABBOT.

These are no heretics.
No Albigenses, Protestants—Nought care they
For quibbles, wrangling points—for visions little:
These are stout rebels, men that must live free;
(Their wont, my Lord, five hundred years, and more:)
Not to be trifled with. I would your Grace
But knew the rage they bear against this convent.
Once when the Holy Office, here established,
With fire had punished some stiff-necked scoffers,
Men spread abroad a rumour that, our monks
Passing at eve the spot, the embers glowed
Deep red in anger and reproach of them!

A manifest lie it was, or dream fantastic;
Or else, those mouldering ashes blushed for shame,
Though dead, to be but glanced at by good men.
For years the story went abroad.

CARDINAL.

I pray you—

Farewell: I must away.

ABBOT.

My Lord, Pianessa!

May he advance?

CARDINAL.

Hath he then sent to me?

ABBOT.

My Lord, most humbly he implores your Grace
To absolve him from his promise.

CARDINAL.

For what purpose?

ABBOT.

My Lord, to terminate these woful struggles,
With overawing presence; nothing more.
He comes a moderator.

CARDINAL.

Let him come,
On this condition, that he prove such only;
And so depart.

ABBOT.

And what, my Lord, if they
Will make no terms?

CARDINAL.

Except in self-defence
He must not strike a blow; his pledge is binding.

ABBOT.

The worse for us left here in state defenceless
When he departs: I would we might go with him!

CARDINAL.

Nay, you must stay.

ABBOT.

My Lord, no doubt we must:
The Church doth need as much. That time is past
When reverence alone and right prescriptive
Maintained her! men have found new continents:
Rome is no more the centre of the earth,
Earth of the stars—her convents Rome must plant,
Like legions on all limits of the Empire.
Stern vigilance, and zeal, and concentration
Alone can save her.

CARDINAL.

Self-defence includes,
Of course, suppression of all dangerous plots,
Though not yet ripe—so they be proved—or certain.
And now farewell.

ABBOT.

There was one thing beside.
Until the Marquis comes, were it not well
To take some slight precautions, good my Lord?
Some pledges, hostages, whate'er seems best?

CARDINAL.

I know not—wherefore—how?

ABBOT.

My Lord, to-morrow
They meet in secret at an old man's house,
A hoary traitor.

CARDINAL.

Wherefore?

ABBOT.

Who can tell?—
To chaunt some hymn, or plan some massacre!
'Twere well to seize a few of those most valued—

CARDINAL.

I will not suffer it—this is not just.

ABBOT.

My Lord, in three days, or at most in four,
Pianessa brings us settled peace. Till then
They shall be kindly used and had in honour.

CARDINAL.

Rightly considered, 'tis for their own good,
Not less than yours.

ABBOT.

Nay, more so!

CARDINAL.

You are sure
This plot exists?

ABBOT.

Quite sure.

CARDINAL.

Is urgent?

ABBOT.

Yes.

CARDINAL.

(*aside.*)—Pray God I ne'er may see those hills again!
'Tis time I were gone hence. You promise then
By the faith and honour of a Christian man,
To use these prisoners well until the Marquis
Search out the matter thoroughly?

ABBOT.

I promise.

CARDINAL.

Well then, farewell.

ABBOT.

Pray you, Lord Cardinal,
To sign the warrant first; it but consigns them
To us, our care, our keeping.

CARDINAL.

So; farewell. (*At the gate.*)
'Tis bitter cold. How black those mountains look!
I marvel much what joy old Jerome found
In solitudes like these;—here Man is nothing.

ABBOT.

Some ancient servitor your Grace hath lost?

CARDINAL.

St. Jerome was a Father of the Church.

ABBOT.

Yes, yes. I meaned that for his strange rude tastes
St. Jerome might have been some serving-man.

CARDINAL. (*Aside.*)
The Church doth need reform: all good things need it.
Each diamond hath its flaw—the which retouched
The jewel is most prized.
(*To his almoner.*)
Give yon poor peasants
A hundred pieces. Would I had not come!
(*In soliloquy.*)
Had I come earlier I had helped these wretches.
Too late! This knot they only can unloose
Who tangled. We that sit on high see little;

Our underlings see less, and yet do all.
Had I come never I had eased this head
Of a great burden, one of many burdens
That bend my eyes in sad quest of my grave.
He angered me—that man with his calm face
In yonder turret. Somewhere I have seen him—
My memory fails me. Verily, we walk
Each his own way, following God's providence.
Yea, sometimes indirect, scarce honest paths
Are forced on us, whereof the end we see not.
God help those peasants, for I cannot help them :
God grant us his good sabbath in the grave.

SCENE 7.

ABBOT. (*To a servant.*)
Send me Lorenzo hither.
(*aside.*) 'Tis well done—
Pianessa looking on this scroll will laugh.
Upon his death-bed he will swear aloud
The priest deceived him. My Lord Cardinal
Will say the Marquis went beyond his orders.
Ha, ha—'tis strange, and both will speak the truth.
Christovel, Mario, men like these are nought.
Pianessa comes! then lack we one thing only—
The art to scourge into their mood of frenzy
Those plausible, peace-loving mountaineers.
The Marquis once incensed, their doom is fixed.
This paper—

(*Lorenzo enters.*)

Quick, Lorenzo—bear this letter
Straight to the Marquis—scatter too those papers
On the way side.

(*To a servant.*)

The Captain of the guard
Is waiting?

SERVANT.

Yes, my Lord.

ABBOT.

Bid him come in.

End of Act the First.

ACT II.—SCENE 1.

Mountain Chapel of pine trees ranged like a Church on a rocky eminence above the old man's cottage.

Chorus.

(NOCTURN HYMN.)

Now God suspends its shadowy pall
  Above the world, yet still
A steely lustre plays o'er all,
  With evanescent thrill.

Softly, with favouring footstep, press,
  Among those yielding bowers ;
Over the cold dews colourless,
  Damp leaves and folded flowers.

Sleep, little birds, in bush and brake !
  'Tis surely ours to raise
Glad hymns ere humbler choirs awake
  Their anthem in God's praise.

The impatient zeal of faithful love
Hath forced us from our bed;
But doubly blest repose will prove,
After our service said!

How dim, how still this slumbering wood!
And O, how sweetly rise
From clouded boughs, and herbs bedewed,
Their odours to the skies!

Sweet, as that mood of mystery,
Where thoughts, that hide their hues
And shapes, are only noticed by
The fragrance they diffuse.

But hark! o'er all the mountain verge,
The night-wind sweeps along;
O haste, and tune its echoing surge
To a prelusive song;

A song of thanks and laud to Him
Who makes our labour cease;
Who feeds with love the midnight dim—
And hearts devout with peace.

SHEPHERD.

Back, children, to your bed, and sleep till sunrise.

FIRST CHILD.

No, no, we cannot sleep to-day—the sun
Will soon be up. This is our festival;
The old man's birth-day:—Know you not?

SECOND CHILD.

I thought
The morn would never come. Flowers we must gather
Soon as the sun has warmed them, and e'er yet
The dew is dried from off them.

FIRST CHILD.

I must find
Large store of flowers, or else there is no birth-day!

SECOND CHILD.

What! would you gather for yourself, and us?

FIRST CHILD.

I gathered flowers all night.

SECOND CHILD.

Where are they then?

FIRST CHILD.

Fast as I caught at them the leaves fell off,
And left me but the stalks.

NURSE.

He hath been dreaming.

SHEPHERD.

But children, when you sing your holy hymns,
Your thoughts should be all heavenly; you should speak
Of God, and of good angels, not of flowers.

SECOND CHILD.

I sang aloud; we sang with all our force:
God must have heard us, and have had great joy,
Though He were ten times farther off than heaven.

NURSE.

Come home.

SHEPHERD.

That brightening doth portend a storm!

FIRST CHILD.

Brother, I have been dreaming,—I can dream.

SCENE 2.

Valley near Rora.

HERMIA AND ANGELA.

(*Two Shepherdesses meet them.*)

FIRST SHEPHERDESS SINGS.

1.

Breath divine of morning odours!
Breath of blossoms, breath of buds;
Onward borne in winged chorus,
Through the alleys and old woods;
And thou stream, that, lightly flowing,
Dost thy pretty mirth enforce;
Flash, and laugh, and crystal ripple,
Hurrying in perpetual course!
O the joy to walk, low-singing,
Through those blooming vales, and say
Another morn hath dropped from heaven
With our aged earth to play!

SECOND SHEPHERDESS SINGS.

2.

Phosphor, through my casement peeping,
On my folded eyelids shone;
" Wake," he sang, " no more of sleeping,
" Shadows melt, the night is gone!"
A bird that with the year is ripening,
One brief moment wakes to pour
Through the boughs wild jets of music,
Then sinks in sleep once more!
O the joy to walk, low-singing,
Through those blooming woods, and say
Another spring has stooped from heaven
With our aged earth to play!

HERMIA.

No step without its song, upon the mountains!
Whence come ye, merry maidens?

FIRST SHEPHERDESS.

From our pillows.

SECOND SHEPHERDESS.

We go to seek wild honey—fare you well.

HERMIA.

Had we not loitered in that bower so long—

ANGELA.

No wonder we are late, an hour was gone
Ere you began—then three times o'er you told it.
When I have lovers too—

HERMIA.

How clear, how fresh,
How sweet this mountain air, the earth's glad breath,
Hovering o'er her wild palpitating bosom!
The lark springs, singing from our feet to heaven:
A bird as happy sings within my breast.
Mark! not one rainbow, but a thousand there,
Blown by the smooth wind past yon forest cliff;
The lustres of all rainbows under heaven
Woven together!

ANGELA.

Cousin, these are the spirits
Of unborn flowers still blind beneath the sod,
Brought down to them from Paradise! Of all
Fair heavenly angels, I would choose to be
Such as make flowers on earth. What is it, think you,
Endears to us so much our happy valleys?
Lovely they are not; they are harsh and rugged:
Nor are they grand, since here there is no sea.
And yet we love these valleys.

HERMIA.

Mountains then,—
Are they not grand?

ANGELA.

Perhaps, but not these Alps.
In England, I have heard, and Sicily,
There are great mountains, fifty miles and more
Above the clouds.

HERMIA.

These mountains are the shields
Of freedom; this, perchance, endears them to us.

ANGELA.

But children love them, who know nought of freedom:
When I was still a child I loved them well;
As well as now.

HERMIA.

Heroes have trod these mountains!

ANGELA.

But there are women, that abhor the gleam
Of sunshine on far swords, that faint at war-songs,
Yet love these vales.

HERMIA.

These mountains are our country!
It is the privilege of the mountain children
To see their country all around—below them—
For miles below through pine-girt, grey ravines,
Whose pines look small as stubble, crushed like stubble,
By raging of the storms—to see it high
Above their heads, as we behold it now,
Bright apparition, from night-clouds emerging;
Cliff rising over cliff, forest o'er forest,
Cloud over cloud, and snow above bright snow!
A vale whose depths are night; whose barrier rocks
Are crowned with one vast sun-gilt diadem;
Whose girth might sphere the host of heaven, yet give
Each glorious spirit a region to himself:
A vale that cannot hold the rushing soul
Of Liberty, from these her eagle nests
Forth issuing daily o'er a world in bondage!
Yes, we behold our country; we do dwell
In it, not on it merely!

ANGELA.

As for me,
I love much better Rora, our own valley—
Ere long we shall be there; hark to those bells!
Why do those monks hard by detest their music?
What sound is that?

HERMIA.

A trampling of fierce feet—

ANGELA.

And a fierce song, trampling the air before them!

(*A band of shepherd youths advance singing.*)

1.

Leave the goats upon the mountain,
'Mid their pasture leave the flock;
Let the chamois now untroubled
Bound from snowy rock to rock.
From the cliffs and from the clouds,
From the depth of pathless woods,
And the caverned solitudes,
Rush ye shepherds, rush in crowds!
Ye have neither spear nor shield;
But the casual waste can yield
Weapons strong when grasped by those
Whose only foes are Virtue's foes!

2.

They have dared a deed accursed:
With a sacrilegious hand,
They have forged upon the altar
Mail of proof and brazen brand.

They have pressed an alien foot,
Upon every household hearth;
Heaven by craft they mock, and earth
With violence and shame pollute.
They have hurled a plague on high,
To rain it ever from the sky;
To rain it downward on and in,
Corruption's plague, the pest of sin!

3.

Now no more of mountain gladness!
Leave the mountain maid unwed;
Leave the hereditary cottage;
Leave the low, but well-loved shed.—

HERMIA.

Friends, whither go you?

SHEPHERDS.

To the battle-field.

HERMIA.

Is there not peace?

SHEPHERDS.

Such peace as tyrants give;
Such peace as freemen scatter to the winds.

HERMIA.

Alas! I thought that peace—

SHEPHERDS.

Nay, press not thus
Your hand upon your heart, gazing at heaven.
The Marquis comes not near us. Christovel
Hath set at nought the compact, and advanced
To Burner Hill. We go to meet him there:
Fear nothing; they'll keep further off next time.

(*They pass on.*)

ANGELA.

Come on ! I would I had been born a boy.—
We'll noise abroad our tale.

HERMIA.

They said 'twas nothing.

ANGELA.

Hark ! hark ! those voices ! we are just arrived.

HERMIA.

Run on across the bridge.

ANGELA.

But tell me, Hermia,
Why have they placed within its wooden roof
Those beautiful old pictures ? every arch
Hath one—twelve stations of our Saviour's passion.
Dewy and dim they look and weather wasted.
'Tis pity there to hang them in the darkness !

HERMIA.

I know not, Angela—ah ! yes—I know—
It is a warning unto every heart
That beats too high in gladness, or too low
Descends in grief ; it is a gentle warning,
That life is such a bridge as we are treading ;
A narrow bridge, a rugged bridge—unsteady—
Irksome ; yet leading to the longed for bourne.
And those still pictures from their airy shadows,
Look down on us, and say with tenderness,
" Why gaze ye on the fluctuating stream ?
" If any sorrow, here was the true sorrow !
" If one be gladsome, here is the true joy !"

ANGELA.

How sweetly on our faces falls the sunshine,
Now we are past ! What stand you gazing at ?
Your eyes are full of tears.

HERMIA.

Rest here a moment.

ANGELA.

Strange that I never marked it—what a covert!

HERMIA.

'Tis a fair place—see you that little bird—

ANGELA.

You never told me—

HERMIA.

That flits up and down?

ANGELA.

You never told me, Hermia, where it was
Our shepherd told you first he loved you?

HERMIA.

Here.

ANGELA.

Ah, this it is that makes us love our valleys!
No brake or bank but hath some memory here.—
The children call.

HERMIA.

Come, quick, they must not find us.

SCENE 3.

Troops, Gianavello, Arnold.

Soldiers advance.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Hail, strong cool wind, that playest upon our foreheads!
From home thou comest, upon thy broad wings bearing
Our grateful welcome—gladsome acclamations,
Veils lightly waved, kisses blown forward to us,
Frank and free jubilee—hail glorious breeze!

GIANAVELLO.

Soldiers, here pause!

ARNOLD.

You must not call them soldiers.

GIANAVELLO.

Shepherds, here rest we for a space. Now Arnold,
Resolve at once,—shall we return to Rora?

ARNOLD.

To Rora, why to Rora? think you then
The Count will be thus easily repulsed!
At Burner's hill he hath beheld his shame;
From Burner's rock right on to Villaro—
And the fierce blood will knock against his heart,
'Till he hath purged that stain. At Bosca next
He'll try his fortune.

GIANAVELLO.

We have left at Rora,
That troop admitted on their vows: 'twas weak—
Weak, and like all weak counsels, perilous.

What if they break their pledge? How say you, Arnold,
What trumpet shall wake up the mountain land?

ARNOLD.

The trumpet God shall sound. I think with you,
We trust too much such promises: no faith
Have they kept with us; none from the beginning.
Men who themselves respect not are not men.
There is no truth in them. As for those soldiers,
Should they grow saucy at their mates' defeat,
Enough there are of young men still at Rora,
To scourge them out of that their ill-timed wrath.
Fear nothing, Gianavello—on to Bosca!
To Rora I return. If all things there
Go well, to-morrow morn we meet at Bosca.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

'Twas right well done.

SECOND SHEPHERD.

With this, my father's sword,
I cleft the helmets of three clamorous soldiers:
Down, down they rolled; there was a fourth of them;
I let him climb till he had gained the summit,
Then spurned my sword away, and closed with him;
And hurled him fiercely from a shepherd's breast,
Into perdition.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

'Twas well done!

THIRD SHEPHERD.

And I—

ARNOLD.

Peace, shepherd youths! Is it so great a marvel,
When unjust men, and in an impious cause,

Meeting with freemen, from the same receive
Fitting rebuke?

GIANAVELLO.

There were three hundred of them!

ARNOLD.

What then? were there not eight of us?

GIANAVELLO.

There were.

ARNOLD.

Upon the high rocks of our country standing;
With God amongst us?

SHEPHERDS.

He hath spoken well.

GIANAVELLO.

He hath well spoken. Arnold, we shall wait you
Near Bosca's chasm; on our way, the sound
Of this our victory, like some glorious music,
Shall swell before us, kindling in all hearts,
The fire, which burns there, to a sacred flame,
That shall make clean our valleys.

ARNOLD.

Fare you well. (*goes.*)

FIRST SHEPHERD.

I would he too came with us. Gianavello
Is a great warrior; yet that stern, good man,
Makes us, if not more sure of victory,
Yet surer of a nobler victory.

GIANAVELLO.

'Tis true.

SECOND SHEPHERD.

When I look up upon his towers
Amid the high grove of the murmuring pines,

The fortress of his fathers, the bright cage
Which that sweet heavenly bird, the chieftain's daughter,
With her wild singing makes so musical,
I sometimes think, with chiefs like these, how gentle
Were the hereditary, feudal sway
Of no far stranger, but—

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Make haste, come on—

THIRD SHEPHERD.

I too have heard that singing from the turret.

SCENE 4.

OLD MAN'S COTTAGE.

Old Man, Shepherds, Agnes, Marguerita, Children, &c.

FIRST CHILD.

'Tis time to crown her—no, not in the arbour,
Bring her to yonder seat; and let the sun
Glitter upon her gems.

MARGUERITA.

This jewelled cross
Is now the last of her ancestral gems.

SECOND CHILD.

Where are her earrings?

MARGUERITA.

They have built yon church.

FIRST CHILD.

'Tis a great pity—but no matter: lead her
To yonder seat. Now I must climb the bank;

And we will drop upon her forehead down
Our garland of white lilies. We have mingled,
See, we have mingled crimson roses with them.—
It was my thought; for I have heard it said,
That martyrs wear in heaven the loveliest crowns;
And they are woven of lilies and of roses,
That all good angels, gazing on those roses,
May have in memory all that holy passion,
The wearers suffered here, and pity them;
And weep upon them till the bloodstains vanish.

(*Crowns her.*)

SECOND CHILD.

See, you have marred the oval of her forehead,
Whose curvature is as the shadowy margin
Of a long laurel leaf; not broad like yours!
Lift up the garland higher: you have stirred
Her hair.

FIRST CHILD.

But I can blow it back again.

(*Abbot and soldiers rush in.*)

ABBOT.

Seize them; seize all; let none escape! not one!

OLD MAN. (*rises.*)

Whom seek ye?

SOLDIERS.

Alloys Saldon.

OLD MAN.

I am he.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.

Fools! wherefore shrink ye back? quick! close upon him!

OLD MAN.

Ye have presumed—I know not for what cause,

To come, unbidden guests, to this my house;
Assailed with tumult strange our festival;
Shaken the roses from those infant hands;
Made pale the cheeks of women; violated
With din, and gleaming of unwonted arms,
This sacred precinct—for what cause I know not.

(*To the Captain of the Guard.*)

You are a soldier, Sir: are these, I ask,
Are such the deeds of honourable men?

(*To the Abbot.*)

You are a monk: do acts like these comport
With learning and secluded piety?
I ask of you once more—What would you here?

ABBOT.

Good friends, be not alarmed: we have discovered
A plot among those vales to massacre
All Christian souls, and burn our convent down;
Therefore have we resolved, in self-defence,
To strike the earlier blow. Some hostages
Are all we seek; these shall be had in honour,
Until a council search the matter. Shame!
Is there not peace between us? Wherefore then,
With secret malice and with bloody purpose,
Rend open once again those scarce-healed wounds
Of ancient woes; tear down the heaven-built fabric
Of new-cemented friendship? Nay, for shame!
If ye were faithful men—men of devotion,
That which ye boast to be, ye could not do it.

OLD MAN.

Sir, in these valleys there is made no plot
Against your faith or you—depart in peace.

It is the cancer which you bear with you,
That doth offend your nostrils—go in peace.

ABBOT.

Wherefore should you distrust us?

A SHEPHERD.

For this cause:
That you have oft deceived us. Nay, who knows not,
Even now in spite of late-cemented peace,
Count Christovel hath marched upon our valley?

ABBOT.

Behold this paper—some of you can read—
And blush at your ill thoughts.

OLD MAN.

The Marquis here
Doth disavow the onset—much bewails it:
Recalls Count Christovel. Why, this is well.
Let us have peace again; depart in peace.

ABBOT.

In peace depart we; ay, but with those pledges.

OLD MAN.

Alas! good friends, I see it in his eye.
They come a troop.

SHEPHERDS.

We are unarmed; a handful!
You promise!—

ABBOT.

I have promised.

SHEPHERDS.

Choose your hostages.

(*He chooses some Shepherds and Agnes.*)

ALL.

She shall not go! Stand up! we can but die.

ABBOT.

I thought that Arnold had been here. At eve
If he demand her, let him take her place.
Soldiers, move on—'tis but a form, good peasants!

(*Exeunt Abbot and Soldiers with the Hostages.*)

Chorus.

1.

There was silence in the heavens,
When the Son of Man was led
From the Garden to the Judgment;
Sudden silence, strange, and dread!
All along the empyreal coasts
On their knees the immortal hosts
Watched, with sad and wondering eyes,
That tremendous sacrifice.

2.

There was silence in the heavens
When the priest his garment tore;
Silence when that twain accursed
Their false witness faintly bore.
Silence (though a tremor crept
O'er their ranks) the Angels kept
While that judge, dismayed though proud,
Washed his hands before the crowd.

3.

But when Christ His cross was bearing,
Fainting oft, by slow degrees,
Then went forth the angelic thunder,
Of legions rising from their knees.
Each bright spirit grasped a brand;
And lightning flashed from band to band:
An instant more had launched them forth
Avenging terrors to the earth.

4.

Then from God there fell a glory,
Round and o'er that multitude;
And by every fervent angel
With hushing hand another stood:
Another, never seen before,
Stood one moment and no more!—
—Peace, brethren, peace! to us is given
Suffering; vengeance is for Heaven!

SCENE 5.

VALLEY NEAR RORA.

Shepherd troops advance singing.

We have risen! lo, we stand,
Holy Freedom, mother dear,
Armed at thine august command;
We have heard thy voice, and hear.
In our hearts we heard it first,
Then from heaven and earth it burst.

Fathers! Freedom's sons of old,
Rise and aid us; rise, O rise:
Clad once more in fleshly mould,
Or armour glittering from the skies.
A tyrant's banner o'er you waves—
Guard our altars! guard your graves!

By those songs that make the limbs
Of the old weak man and frail
Swift and mighty; by those hymns
That make the priests who sing them pale,
Chaunted in the midnight storms;
Be among us, awful Forms!

Be as lightning in their faces,
Hang like darkness on their rear ;
Like the sleet wind track their traces,
Like ill omens haunt their ear :
And ever more revolve and roll
Sad visions through their gulfs of soul !

FIRST SHEPHERD.

You will not give it me ?

SECOND SHEPHERD.

In faith, not I.
This banner I will bear with mine own hand,
As heavy as it is, till I have laid it
Before the feet of all our Elders met
In council.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Well, it matters not : this chain
I tore from Mario's corslet ; ay, and bear it
Not to the feet of any reverend Elders,
But Agnes' self—

SHEPHERDS.

Hush!

SECOND SHEPHERD.

All the chains on earth
Can never tangle those light heavenly feet !

SHEPHERDS.

'Twas a grand shout !

FIRST SHEPHERD.

That shout they made in falling !
I hear it still : pine-stem, and rock hurled after,
Mocked it with vain and trivial emulation.

Ha! ha! that cry! the mountains caught it up,
And tossed it from their cliffs this way and that,
Like children playing ball.

SHEPHERDS.

Ha! who goes there?

(*They rush forward and seize a scout.*)

Speak, for thy life: what art thou?

SCOUT.

Spare my life!
It was the Abbot sent me!

SHEPHERD.

Whither? and wherefore?

SCOUT.

Two hours ago he sent me with this letter.

SHEPHERDS.

Give me that paper.

Reads.—Hearing, my Lord Marquis, to my sorrow, of that calamity which by mischance hath happened to certain of thy valiant troops at Burner (some women returning to Rora this morning spread abroad the intelligence) I send to advise thee that at Bosca, not far off, is an entrance to the valley more accessible: indeed from what I have heard, I doubt not but that ere now thou hast sent thither, not a handful of men as yesterday, but a large and sufficient force. Your Lordship's message to the hinds here, disavowing the attack, hath not been without its service. God keep your Lordship many days! His and your most faithful servant,

WHOM THOU KNOWEST.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Knewest thou of all this treason?

SCOUT.

In sooth, not I.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Thou liest; and for thy falsehood shouldst thou perish;
Thou and thy master. Wilt thou save thy life?

SCOUT.

Command me what thou wilt.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Take back this paper
To him that sent it.

SCOUT.

Yes—

FIRST SHEPHERD.

When I have written
A little love note on the other side.
Writes.—Most excellent Abbot. After three defeats in two days (for besides that calamity at Burner I have this morning been again driven back at Peyro Capello, and yet again defeated on my retreat thence) I know not what to do: the most of my men are slain; thou wilt grieve to hear that so many Christian folk have died without the rites of the Church. I begin to think that having come up hither with the intention of snaring these wild geese of the mountains I have been myself ensnared, not by a wild goose but by one whom much stillness and over-eating hath made heavy, and as it were, dull.

PIANESSA.

SHEPHERD.

See that if one demand of thee this letter, thou deliver it

not up at the first summons, but carry it safely to him from whom thou camest; and so get thee gone. (*Scout goes.*)

SHEPHERDS.

Ha, ha, a right good jest!

FIRST SHEPHERD.

But mark you, friends;
The Monk made mention of some larger force,
Sent on, as he believed, to Bosca's chasm:
This Gianavello knew not. We must join him.
'Tis well we met their scout.

SECOND SHEPHERD.

I think not so.
That place is strong. Our orders are direct
To Rora.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Nay, I go; 'twill be more laurels.

SHEPHERDS.

And I:—and I.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Come on: we all must go!

SCENE 6.

A ROOM IN THE ABBEY.

Abbot, and Captain of the Guard.

ABBOT.

Tush! thou art more than half a heretic.
How often must I answer these are beasts
Whose death is a sweet-smelling sacrifice?
Dost hear?

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.

I am a soldier, not a priest.

ABBOT.

And for that cause let others judge for thee.
This is our matter. If it be a sin,
The sin is ours, not thine; and to say all,
The Church doth will it.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.

Pardon me, good Abbot,
The Church hath given no orders: 'tis your work.

ABBOT.

Think you the Church can only speak in thunder?
I tell you there are whispers! Read this paper.
(*Presents him with the paper signed by the Cardinal.*)

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.

'Tis strange!

SERVANT.

My Lord! the Courier—

ABBOT.

Bid him enter.
How now with thy pale face? A letter, ha! (*reads.*)

To the Captain of the Guard.

Mild interceder for these humble hinds,
Read thou this letter!

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD. (*after reading.*)

By the sword I bear,
They take us by the beard and spit at us!

ABBOT.

Yea, by the cap thou bear'st, and bells and tassels.
Ay, glance again at that old palsied writing;
Think'st thou I forged the Cardinal's signature?
What next?

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.

I said I was no priest: these matters
Belong to priests; do with them what thou wilt.
By Heaven they mock us to the face!

ABBOT.

Good friend,
A little before sunset! Fare you well!

[*Exit Captain of the Guard.*

(*In soliloquy.*)

Henceforth for ever they shall mock no more
Me and my convent. Henceforth child of theirs
Never again, passing, shall point at us,
Nor old man chaunt a moralizing psalm
On monkish avarice and voluptuousness!
They shall no more appeal—inform—convict—
Have legates sent abroad to probe and check us!
Never. Those lukewarm boors had all but foiled me;
But this our sacrifice shall stir them up.
The Marquis now must move in self-defence,
And being angered once—I know the man!

Forth, forth, my thoughts! and from your wings shake fiercely
Tempest, and fire, and death, o'er valley and town!
Yea, be the vengeance, rushing in your wake,
Swift as your flight and fell! The hate of years
Steps to the chambers of its consummation.
The hereditary war finds rest. 'Tis well.

SCENE 7.

BEFORE THE ABBEY.

Prisoners, Monks, Guards, Villagers.

A Pyre.

WOMAN.

O God, O God, they are not yet come back!
Two hours ago our band should have returned!

SHEPHERD.

Say, who is he that yonder stands apart,
His white face shadowed 'neath the porch?

WOMAN.

Who? Arnold!

ABBOT.

Peace to the prisoners! Liberty and peace;
Peace unconditional and sure, if they,
Repenting first their malice and confessing,
Shall seek to reconcile their sinful souls
With that one Church, open alike to all.
If not—why then the secular arm of Justice
Must do its part. Mercy hath finished here.

PEOPLE.

'Tis not the Church, no, nor the secular force,
'Tis Thou that doest this deed!

ABBOT.

Draw forth the prisoners;
That Maid the first. Women are not obdurate;
She'll point the way.

PEOPLE.

Slave! thou shalt die for this!

ABBOT. (*To a Monk.*)

Question her, brother.

MONK.

Father, nay, speak thou.

ARNOLD.

Fulfil thy pledge! I give myself for her!

ABBOT.

Peace, peace! There is a fire in store for thee:
Each in his turn.

(*To the Captain of the Guard.*)

Question her!

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.

Nay, not I.

ABBOT.

Maiden! dost thou renounce thy heresies?
Once more, dost thou renounce? She answers not.
It is her answer—place her on the pile.

PEOPLE.

Stop! stop! ah, God, she is too young to die;
She hath not sixteen years.

WOMEN.

No, not fifteen!

ABBOT.

So : place her on the pile. Dost thou renounce ?

PEOPLE.

O Arnold, speak ! she is too young to die !
She is thy child, command her not to die !
Say, say, God made not such a one as her,
To die a death so fearful ! Speak, O speak !
Tell her it is a sin !

SOLDIERS.

Speak to her, chieftain ;
By Heaven she must not die !

ARNOLD.

Agnes ! speak thou !

MONKS.

See, see, she points to Heaven !—

ABBOT.

It is her answer.
Throw on the fagots. So—

PEOPLE.

O God ! O God !

The fagots piled, the soldiers are driven back by a supernatural brightness which surrounds the pyre. Celestial voices sound in the air.

Chorus of Angels and Agnes sing.

ANGELS.

Bearing lilies in our bosom,
Holy Agnes, we have flown,
Missioned from the Heaven of Heavens
Unto thee, and thee alone.
We are coming, we are flying,
To behold thy happy dying.

AGNES.

Bearing lilies far before you,
Whose fresh odours backward blown
Light those smiles upon your faces,
Mingling sweet breath with your own.
Ye are coming; smoothly, slowly,
To the lowliest of the lowly.

ANGELS.

Unto us the boon was given;
One glad message, holy maid,
On the lips of two blest spirits,
Like an incense-grain was laid;
As it bears us on like lightning
Cloudy skies are round us bright'ning.

AGNES.

I am here, a mortal maiden;
If our Father aught hath said,
Let me hear His words and do them—
Ought I not to feel afraid,

As ye come your shadows flinging
O'er a breast to meet them springing ?

ANGELS.

Agnes, there is joy in Heaven !
  Gladness like the day is flung
O'er the spaces never measured ;
  And from every angel tongue
Swell those songs of impulse vernal,
All whose echoes are eternal.

Agnes, from the depth of Heaven
  Joy is rising like a spring,
Borne above its grassy margin,
  Borne in many a crystal ring ;
Each o'er beds of wild flowers gliding,
Over each low murmurs sliding.

When a Christian lies expiring,
  Angel choirs, with plumes outspread,
Bend above his death-bed singing,
  That when Death's mild sleep is fled
There may be no harsh transition
While he greets the heavenly vision.

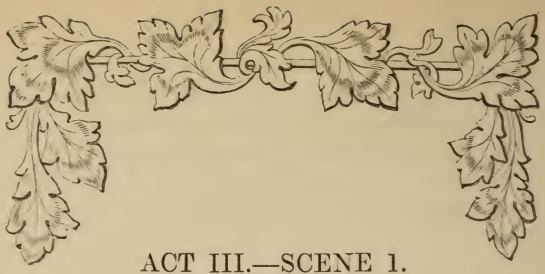
AGNES.

Am I dreaming, blessed angels ?
  Late ye floated two in one ;
Now a thousand radiant spirits
  Round me weave a glistening zone !
Lilies as they wind, extending ;
Roses with those lilies blending.

See! the horizon's ring they circle!
Now they gird the zenith blue;
And now o'er every brake and billow
Float like mist, and flash like dew.
All the earth with life o'er-flowing,
Into heavenly shapes is growing!

They are rising: they are rising:
As they rise, the veil is riven!
They are rising: I am rising:
Rising with them into heaven:—
Rising with those shining legions
Into Life's eternal regions.

End of the Second Act.



ACT III.—SCENE 1.

VALLEY NEAR RORA.

Shepherds.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Thou to the south, this young man to the north,
Those others east and west—make speed.

SECOND SHEPHERD.

On! on!
No town or cottage, but shall hear the tidings;
No town or cottage, but shall rouse itself
And cast abroad the hearts and hands therein:
No hearts or hands, but shall avenge this wrong.
It shames me that I wept upon her grave.

SHEPHERDS.

Blood shall be tears, which they shall weep for us!

SECOND SHEPHERD.

'Twas well to lay her in the old castle garden,
Among the lilies and the oranges;
Virginal flowers those lilies, and the others,
All rich with nuptial bloom for her high bridal:
The warmest spot in all the vale! and yet,
Had they but in our common churchyard laid her,
That holy place had been thrice sanctified;
No child thenceforth had feared to die.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Make haste.
This is the morning of a day, henceforward
To be remembered while the world endures.

SHEPHERDS.

What orders hath he given? what said?

FIRST SHEPHERD.

No word
Hath Arnold spoken, save to the Monks last night—
"To-morrow, at this hour, we meet again."

SECOND SHEPHERD.

Wake up the vales! These tresses of black hair,
And those white locks, scattered through valley and town,
Shall do their work right well—that old grey man!
But 'twas his time.

SHEPHERDS.

We meet again at sunset.

SCENE 2.

CHURCHYARD OF RORA.

A FUNERAL TRAIN IS DEPARTING.

Villagers and Pastor.

Chorus.

1.

The marvels of the seas and earth,
Their works and ways, are little worth
Compared with Man their lord:
He masters Nature through her laws,
And therefore not without a cause
Is he by all adored.

2.

Lord of the mighty eye and ear,
Each centering an immortal sphere
Of empire and command:
Lord of the heavenly breast and brow,
That step which makes all creatures bow,
And the earth-subduing hand.

3.

And yet, not loftier swells the state
Of Man o'er shapes inanimate,
In majesty confest,
Than among men, that man, by Faith
Assured in life, confirmed in death,
Uptowers above the rest!

4.

For God is with him: and the end
Of all things, downward as they tend,
Toward their term and close,
A sov'reign throne for him prepares;
And makes of vanquished pains and cares
A couch for his repose!

5.

While kingdoms lapse, and all things range,
He rules a world exempt from change:
He sees as Spirits see:
And garners ever more and more,
While years roll by, an ampler store
Of glorious liberty—

6.

Yea, ten times glorious when at last
His spirit, all her trials past,
Stands up, prepared to die;
And, fanning wide her swan-like plumes,
A glory flings across the glooms,
Through which her course must lie.

VILLAGE PASTOR.

'Tis well! Now strew the flowers upon the grave.
Why weep you, friends? On graves like this, methinks,
On graves so still and sweet, the rainbow rests;
A blessed arc spanning our watery glens!
Once more, why weep ye?

FIRST SHEPHERD.

'Twas her death that kill'd him.
Softly as snowy flakes the years descended
On his white head.

SECOND SHEPHERD.

'Twas not her death that kill'd him.
He asked no questions, and they told him nothing.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

How died he, then?

SECOND SHEPHERD.

Thus it befell. Ere dawn
They heard the old man stirring—'twas his custom,
To sit each morning 'neath his porch, expectant;
And there, in devout quiet, watch the coming
Of light, late ambush'd in the drooping clouds;
Whose colours, crimson, green, and deep-dyed orange,
Composed, so said he, in their changeful play,
A sort of music, or prelusive anthem

Of virtue, to stir up within man's heart,
A harmony as sweet and as devotional,
Unto their Maker's praise. His children never
Joined him in these his earliest orisons,
Holding them sacred.
This morning, when his daughters went abroad,
Finding him seated yet, they stood behind him,
Silent awhile ; but when he answered not,
Then Marguerita on his shoulder laid
Her hand ; and Gianavello's wife made sign
To the young children, climbing the green slope,
To lay the flowers beside him, but speak not,
Deeming he slept. The sun, that moment rising,
Cast a faint bloom upon his aged cheek,
So that the children knew not he was dead ;
But walked with awe, and stepping by him, kissed
With their soft lips his hands—Giovanni then
Whispered his mother gently, " He is cold !"
Whereat poor Marguerita, his own daughter,
Grew on the sudden pale ; and his son's wife
Went forward and looked on him. He was dead—
The children wept, conscious some Sorrow stood
Upon their hearth ; though what it was they knew not.

VILLAGE PASTOR.

Friends, let us hence : it is not kind or courteous
To linger longer : see you round the grave
His children, and their children—we will go.

SCENE 3.

RORA.

Villagers, Arnold.

ARNOLD.

Let all the women hence, and with the children
Hide near yon chapel of old pines. The Marquis
Advances swiftly, led by certain Monks,
That fled last night unmarked.

FIRST SHEPHERD.

Not Monks but monsters!
Wild beasts, escaping from their burning lairs—

ARNOLD.

Peace, Shepherd! See that all depart at once.
No time remains for wailings or farewells:
No, Shepherds, nor for wrath: the hour is come!
The offering which we offer up this day
In steadfastness of spirit we must offer,
And not in any passion. (*To Gianavello.*)
Place our men,
As I have said, before their cottage homes.

GIANAVELLO.

A little further north—

ARNOLD. (*In a whisper.*)

What, know you not
The entrance of the valley now is lost?
Would you deny them their high privilege
Of dying near their homes—almost in sight
Of those that loved them, parents, brothers—daughters—

A ROMAN CATHOLIC PEASANT.

Arnold ! O Arnold ! look on my poor daughters !
To thee alone I speak. Look on them, chieftain !
Must these be left for that fierce soldiery ?
I know them—In my youth I served with them.
Ah ! let these orphans, mother they have none,
Hide also in the caves.

ARNOLD.

'Tis well for thee,
Old man, 'tis well for thee those monks are dead !
Thy daughters shall be safe : let them go hence.

SCENE 4.

THE BROW OF THE HILL BEFORE RORA.

The Marquis of Pianessa and troops.

PIANESSA.

I thank thee, Heaven ! henceforth the way is smooth :
No rocks, no pine-stems ; O that drop by drop !
How it made mad the thirst with which I burn.
Henceforth we are as free as fire, and onward
Rush, swift along the tempest of our rage.
Pause here awhile. Give me a cup of wine.

OFFICER.

Quick, bring some wine.

PIANESSA.

See you that village yonder,
With sunshine on its roofs? It smiles, like one
Who boasts of some short-lived impunity!
Glittering it stands among its orchards, bowers,
And vines—look down—'tis Rora! ay, 'tis Rora!

(*Soldier brings wine.*)

Three hundred men, my best, from Burner's hill
Were chased, a bloody track to Villaro!
Fill up the cup—three hundred men were hurled
From Peyro's summit to the waves beneath.
Fill up the cup—fill high—three hundred men
Down Bosca's chasms were dashed from rock to rock—

(*Pauses—Officer presents the wine.*)

I will not drink it! Wine no more, or bread,
Shall pass these lips, or sleep assuage my breast,
While stands in yonder village, roof or wall.—
See you those rebels where they crowd? Look on them!
Give me the cup—this wine shall be their blood.
Thus, thus, I pour it forth upon the ground.

(*Pours the wine on the earth.*)

Ha, ha, ye thought not I could wait so long!
Say, are the horses breathed?

OFFICER.

All fresh.

PIANESSA.

Then on!

(*The troops advance at full speed.*)

SCENE 5.

Caverned rocks in the mountains above Rora.—Chorus of Virgins and Wives—Old Men, Children.

A GIRL.

It thunders !

AN OLD MAN.

No, it is their meeting.

A WOMAN.

Ah !

Thus far, beyond the sight of this dread battle
To wait the issue in suspense, and hear
No sound, but those fierce shouts, and our hearts' beating !
Hurl down, O wind ! yon rocks ; their jagged pines
Leave half the vale exposed, yet hide the battle.

SECOND WOMAN.

A tenfold shout—now, now they meet. O heaven !

Chorus.

Clouds above the dark vale streaming !
Rising ever, swift and free !
O that, as a mirror gleaming,
You might shew us all you see !
Glittering heralds you should be
Of a sun-bright victory !

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Now the battle hosts are meeting—
Tangled now in mazy error,
Like whirlpools down a river fleeting—
I am blind with doubt and terror.
Better death, than doubt. O cease!
Cease, or burst my heart. Peace, peace!

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

Darkness and Storm before him driven,
Ascending ever high and higher,
Yon Eagle cleaves the clouded heaven—
Lo! now sun-smitten, like a pyre
He burns! auspicious omen! we
Behold our Fate and Fame in thee!

FIRST GIRL.

Have we judged well?

SECOND GIRL.

To give up all at once!
The thought is glorious—

WOMEN.

But the act! woe, woe!

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

I heard a voice: the clouds were fled;
All heaven hung vast and pure o'er head;
The mountain rock, and mountain sod,
Lay steadfast, as the Word of God!
I heard a voice: it spake to me,
Far murmuring, "One hath died for thee,
"That thou shouldst live both just and free."

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

" For how," that deep voice murmured—" how
" Shall man to God his forehead bow,
" Unless he first that sign august
" Lift up—God's Image—from the dust?
" Or how expand a chain-worn breast
" For Christ therein, an equal guest,
" To find his temple and his rest?"

FIRST WOMAN.

Alas! and see you those poor children straying
Still on, by cavern, brake, and rifted pine?
They seek, but hope no more to find the maid.

(*Children pass through the caverns singing.*)

1.

We have sought her in her bower;
In the garden we have sought her:
In the forest, hour by hour,
We have sought the chieftain's daughter.
She that was to us so tender,
Answer now she gives us none:
She is gone we know not whither.
If we knew where she is gone,
We would gather flowers, and send her
Those she loved, the last to wither.
Agnes! our beloved! come,
To thy children and thy home!

2.

If we sometimes sighed before,
She was here to lull our sorrow;
And her smile said " Weep no more;
" Cloudy night hath sunny morrow!"

Now we mourn with none to chide us.
And the poor she loved so well
Stand like orphan'd creatures wailing.
O beloved Agnes! tell
Who will teach us now, or guide us,
Or reprove each little failing?
Agnes, our beloved! come,
To thy children and thy home!

3.

She was not like others, gay—
But the mirthful loved her sadness:
And the mourner oft would say,
None could yield so soft a gladness.
As a star, remote and lonely,
Piercing depths of midnight moods,
Makes the dark leaves dance in lightness;
So into dejected moods,
She, that mournful lady only,
Shone with beams of heavenly brightness.
Agnes, O beloved! come
To thy children and thy home!

4.

O beloved Agnes! where,
Where art thou so long delaying?
O'er what mountains bleak and bare
Are thy tender feet a-straying?
They have told us thou art taken
To some palace white like snow;
And some think that thou art sleeping:
This we know not; but we know,

Every morning when we waken,
All our lids are wet with weeping.
O beloved Agnes! come
To thy children and thy home!

Chorus.

Hark, hark the Storm! the voice not long
Outstrips the Presence: see you now,
Not leaves alone, but branch and bough!
They roof the glen, a rushing throng,
Fast borne in current fierce and strong!
The cliffs that wall the vale are shaking:
The forests to their hearts are quaking:
Crouch in caves who will: but I
Exulting pace this platform high!
My panting soul, with joy o'er-awed,
I cast upon the storm abroad:
And soon will hurl, inspired by Wrong,
Thereon my vengeance and my song!

WOMEN.

Is it the gasping of the Storm
That makes her wan cheek red and warm?
Lo! how she fixes now her eyes—

Chorus.

Catching the quickening impulse from those kindling skies!
See! see the storm grows radiant now,
As radiant as a lifted brow
Too long abased! lo, fast and wide,
Avenging Forms the tempest ride;
And answer, round, above, and under,
With choruses of rapturous thunder—

Burst on the tyrant, Storm from God!
Hurl them like leaves from rock to rock!
Trample them down through clay and sod:
From dark to dark!—their banners mock
The purple and the blood-stained gold
Thy clouds have vengefully unrolled—

WOMEN.

She lifts her hands, and flings her ban
Abroad—

Chorus.

Where, where is he, the man,
That man all weltering in his gore,
Who fell not to the earth before
His eyes had seen our high Desire
Made perfect in that penal fire?

FIRST WOMAN.

The wounded man she means who fell last night
Under the convent wall.

SECOND WOMAN.

Quick, bear him hither.

(*To a wounded man.*)

There are who heard not of that righteous slaughter:
I pray you tell us of it.

WOUNDED MAN.

It was thus.
Their guards beat back, we trod them down like corn
Upon the thrasher's floor; next stormed the gates:
The Monks had fled. Then to the chapel rushed we,
And saw, at the extreme end of the aisle,
Upon the high steps of the altar standing,
The Abbot all alone.—
Half turned towards us, in one hand he held

A mighty golden crucifix—(the other
Over the gem-wrought chalice laid along)—
And he stood silent. In a ring we girt him;
And spake not, while he kept his eye upon us.
This silence lasted long. At last he turned
Round to the altar; and in usual sort
Proceeded with his Office; whereupon
Arnold delayed no longer, but advancing,
"Murderer," he cried, "the demons call thee!—down!"
And smote him with his sword. The rest rushed in;
And struck him through the heart with all their daggers;
He answering nought, but holding in his hands
Chalice and cross: to the earth they fell with him:
And then we fired the convent, and stood round,
And watched with old and young the blaze thereof.
This was the end of all.

WOMEN.

And if one hearth
Still in yon village burn, that convent's blaze
Lives in its flame.

Chorus.

For Tyrants say
That men were shaped but to obey:
Dead spokes alone, to roll and reel,
Within their car's revolving wheel!
Let them take heed, for they have driven
In frenzy o'er the rocky plain,
'Till earth's deep groans are heard in heaven,
And fire bursts from those wheels amain—
Not soon the stormy flames expire
When hearts contagious in their ire
Burst forth, like forests catching fire.

2.

Or else this madness preys upon their spirit ;
That all good things, to man's estate which fall
Come from their sacred prescience—they inherit
Wisdom divine to nurse this mundane ball !
Yea, they apportion times ; with care dispensing
The seasons ; when to sow, what days for reaping,
What space for food and labour, praying, sleeping ;
With stellar beams our harvests influencing ;
Out of the heaven of high conceit diffusing
Sunshine and breeze amid our murmuring grain ;
Showering the former and the latter rain—
Or else with groans their vacant hours amusing,
And sending forth a famine, to fulfil
On men of froward heart the counsels of their will !
Such airy dream to realize,
All rights, all instincts they despise ;
On every hearth they plant a foot,
Importunate, impure, and brute :
Round every bed a serpent creeps :
They make along the venomed wall
The hundred-footed whisper crawl—
But Vengeance in a moment leaps
Forth from the frowning caverns of her noontide sleeps !

FIRST WOMAN.

How her high passion teems with thoughts as high ;
Like fire from the Earth's heart quickening the seeds
In some volcanic soul to stateliest growth !
Flushed is her cheek with crimson as she cow'rs
Beneath their umbrage !

Chorus.

Ha ! how well
That chief made answer. At the door
The herald stood, and shook all o'er ;
And spake ; "These tumults thou shalt quell :
"Or else, a deep oath I have sworn,
"Thy wife, the children of thy joy,
"With fire in vengeance to destroy."
Then made he answer, without scorn :
"Their flesh thou mayest consume ; Time must :
"But I commend their spirits
"To God, in whom we trust."

WOMEN.

See, see that man ! he's hurt—how goes the battle ?

MESSENGER.

Thrice have they rushed upon us : thrice fled back :
They form once more their army. Arnold sent me—
He prays you to remove.

WOMEN.

We will not stir !
Why should we move ?

MESSENGER.

The fight is worse than doubtful.
Fresh troops are pouring on us—Christovel—
Mario—the rest—have burst into the valley
From every entrance. We are girt—surrounded—

Chorus.

Fight to the death ! The chieftain : lives he yet ?

MESSENGER.

He lives.

Chorus.

And Gianavello?

MESSENGER.

He is well.

WOMEN.

Ah tell us, tell us—no, no, tell us not—
Tell us not who hath fallen.

MESSENGER.

Alas! alas!—

WOMEN.

Speak not! speak not! we will bind up thy wounds;
Thou art too faint.

MESSENGER.

Alas, poor Marguerita!
When all departed she would not depart.

WOMEN.

Ah—what of her?

MESSENGER.

A bullet pierced her heart.
Staggering into her husband's arms she fell,
Crying aloud, "'Tis nothing, love, 'tis nothing:
"It is God's will: fight thou unto the last."
And so expired.

WOMEN.

Take that maid away—
See, she has fallen upon the rock in swoon.

Chorus.

Smooth song no more; an idle chime!
'Tis ours, 'tis ours, ere yet we die,
To hurl into the tide of Time
The bitter book of prophecy.
For ages we have fought this fight;
For ages we have borne this wrong.
How long, Holy and Just! how long,
Shall lawless might oppress the right?
Our children, wandering in their bowers,
Have they not snared and borne away;
And fed on pois'nous food their prey,
Until we groaned to call them ours?
No dreamy influence numbs my song!
Too long suspended it has hung,
Like glaciers, bending in their trance
From cliffs, some horned valley's wall—
One flash, from God one ireful glance,
To vengeful plagues hath changed them all.
Down, headlong torrents ('tis your hour
Of triumph) on the invading Power!

Woe, woe to tyrants! Who are they?
Whence come they? Whither are they sent?
Who gave them first their baleful sway
O'er ocean, isle, and continent?
Wild beasts they are, ravening for aye;
Vultures that make the world their prey;
Pests, ambushed in the noontide day;
Ill stars of ruin and dismay!

Tempestuous winds that plague the ocean!
Hoar waves along some rock-strewn shore
That rush and race, with dire commotion
Raking those rocks in blind uproar!

FIRST WOMAN.

She sings aright: this music of her anger
Makes my blood leap like founts from the warm earth.
My chill is past.

SECOND WOMAN.

Tis well. We shall die free!

Chorus.

As though this Freedom they demand of us
Were ours, at will to keep or to bestow!
To them a boon profane, a gift of woe;
For us a loss fatal and blasphemous!
This gift, this precious freedom of the soul,
It is not man's, nor under man's control:
From God it comes; His prophet here, and martyr;
Which when He gives to man, man's sword must guard:
No toy for sport; no merchandize for barter;
A duty, not a boast; the spirit's awful ward!—
Dread, sudden stillness, what art thou portending?
Once more each word I mutter on mine ear
(Forward in anguish bending)
Drops resonant and clear.—
The forest wrecks, each branch and bough,
O'er voiceless caves lie tranquil now:
No sound, except the wind's far wail,
Forth issuing through the portals of the vale,
Now low, now louder and more loud,
Under the bridge-like archway of yon low-hung cloud!

Woe, woe to Tyrants! those who sleep
Long centuries in death-caves deep,
Shall rise their jubilee to keep,
When down into the dust are hurled
The Idols that made dumb the world!
It may be some shall sink more late;
Some meet perchance a milder fate;
But lips their wrongs have flecked with foam
In thunder speak the dirge of Rome!

FIRST WOMAN.

O God, what light is that? See, see, it spreads!
The vale is all one flame—the clouds catch fire—
Our hearths, our homes! all lost—gone, gone, for ever

SECOND WOMAN.

It wakes another tempest. From the gorges
And deep glens, on all sides the winds come rushing,
And mate themselves unto that terrible flame,
As we shake hands fiercely with our despair.
Lo, once again that sound! that flame, behold it!
Once more it leaps off from its burning altar
Up, up, to heaven—

Chorus.

To be our witness there

MESSENGER.

Arnold is dead! He felt the wound was mortal.
Then stood he up from slaying of his foes,
And smiled, and gave this staff to me, and said:
"If there be yet one free spot left on Earth,
"Let them plant there this staff—
"And there, not on my grave, remember me!'

Chorus.

Is Arnold dead?

MESSENGER.

Arnold is dead; and with him
The freedom of the mountain-land is dead.
I too am dying; take ye then this staff;
And if there be one free spot left on Earth,
Plant it upon that spot. And be ye sure
From out this root shall grow the goodliest tree
That ever spread a green dome under Heaven.

SECOND MESSENGER.

Arnold is dead! all our brave troops are slaughtered—
The glory hath departed from our land!

FIRST SEMI-CHORUS.

Boast not, haughty conqueror!
Not from thee hath fallen this woe:
He, the Lord of Peace and War,
He alone hath laid us low.
Boast not, haughty conqueror!
Slay, but boast not—Woe! Woe! Woe

SECOND SEMI-CHORUS.

From Heaven the curse was shaken,
On this predestined head:
From thy hand the plague was taken;
By a mightier vengeance sped.
Mine is the sorrow,
Mine, and for ever;
Who can turn back again
A mighty archer's arrow?

Who can assuage my pain?
Who can make calm my brain?
Who can deliver?

Chorus.

1.

But within me thoughts are rising,
Severer thoughts, and soul sufficing:
Swift, like clouds in exhalation,
Come they rushing: whilst a glory
Falls on locks this fiery Passion
Turns from black to hoary!
Voices round me borne in clangour
Sound the trump of things to be:
And heavenly flashes of wise anger
Give my spirit light to see
The great Future; and aright
Judge this judgment of to-night.

2.

I trembled when the strife began—
Praying, my clasped hands trembled,
With ill-timed weakness ill dissembled.
But now beyond the strength of man,
My strength has in a moment grown;
And I no more my griefs deplore
Than doth a shape of stone—
A marble shape, storm-filled, and fair
With might resurgent from despair,
I walk triumphant o'er my woe:
For well I feel and well I know,

That God with me this wrong sustains,
And, in me swelling, bursts my chains!

3.

And dost thou make thy boast then of their lying
All cold, upon the mountain and the plain,
My sons whom thou hast slain?
And that nor tears nor sighing
Can raise their heads again?
My sons, not vainly have ye died,
For ye your country glorified!
Each moment as in death ye bowed,
On high your martyred souls ascended;
Yea, soaring in perpetual cloud,
This earth with heaven ye blended—
A living chain in death ye wove;
And rising, raised our world more near those worlds above!

4.

They perish idly? they in vain?
When not a sparrow to the plain
Drops uncared for! Tyrant! they
Are radiant with eternal day!
And oft, unseen, on us they turn
Those looks that make us inly burn,
And swifter through our pulses flow
The bounding blood, their blood below!
How little cause have those for fear
Whose outward forms alone are here!
How nigh are they to Heaven, who there
Have stored their earliest, tenderest care!
Whate'er was ours of erring pride,
This agony hath sanctified.

Our destined flower thy blasts but tear
Its sacred seed o'er earth to bear!
O'er us the storm hath passed, and we
Are standing here immoveably
Upon the platform of the Right;
And we are inwardly as bright
As those last drops which hang like fire,
Close-clustered on the piny spire,
When setting suns their glories pour
On yellow vales perturbed no more;
While downward from the eagle's wing
One feather falls in tremulous ring,
And far away the wearied storms retire.

5.

I heard, prophetic in my dreams,
The roaring of tumultuous streams,
While downward, from their sources torn,
Came pines and rocks in ruin borne.
Then spake that Storm to me and said,
"Quake thou with awe, but not with dread:
"For these are thrones and empires rolled
"Down Time's broad torrents, as of old.
"But thou those flowers remember well,
"By foaming floods in peace that dwell;
"For thus 'mid wrecks of fear and strife,
"Rise up the joys of hourly life;
"And all pure bonds and charities
"Exhale their sweetness to the skies—
"But woe to haughtier spirits. They,
"At God's command, are swept away,
"Into the gulfs that know not day."

6.

Behold! one period of the world is ended!
And haply now the Ending is begun.
And we, by man unsolaced and unfriended,
To God and man our righteous parts have done.
Nor done in vain. In climes remote,
By loneliest shores, where act or thought
Are free, there shall be men to say,
"Who, who before our birth were they,
"That burst the yoke and mocked the pride
"Of him the nations deified?
"Who were they? Were they friends to man?
"Then stamp our banners with their ban!
"Who were they? Were they friends to God?
"Then gather from their burial sod
"A wreath to deck each crest and crown,
"That shakes not at a tyrant's frown!"

7.

And now my song is sung. I go
Far up to fields of endless snow.
Alone till death I walk; unsoiled
By air the tyrants have defiled.
Over a cheek no longer pale
I drop henceforth a funeral veil;
And only dimmed and darkened see
The mountains I have looked on free.
Ye that below abide, unblest,
Paint now no more with flowers yon dells;
Nor speak in tone like that which swells,
Loud-echoed from the freeman's breast:

In sable garments walk, and spread
With searments black your buried dead.
Farewell to all: I go alone;
And dedicate henceforth my days
To muse on God's high will, and raise
My hands toward th' eternal Throne—
And I beneath the stars will thread
The dark beads of my rosaries;
And ofttimes earthward bow my head,
And listen ofttimes for the tread
Of some far herald, swiftly sent,
To crown with light a shape time-bent,
And dry a childless widow's eyes
With tidings grave of high content,
Wherein unheeded prophecies
Shall have their great accomplishment!

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

Translation

from the Prophet Micah.

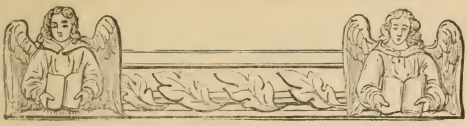
CHAP. VI.

Hear ye the voice of God! Thus saith the Lord.
"Arise! contend before the ancient mountains:
"Make thy voice heard abroad among the hills."
Hear ye God's controversy, O ye mountains!
His pleading with His people, O ye hills!
For God will plead
With Israel, His people. Hear, and heed!

"What have I done to you, My people? When
"Did I afflict you, O ye sons of men?
"Witness against Me then.
"Up from your woes in Pharaoh's land I bore you:
"Yea, from the servile house in vengeance tore you:
"And Moses, Aaron, Miriam, sent before you.
"Remember Balak's counsel; and the word
"With which, as with a sword,
"My Prophet smote him, while he paced
"From steep to steep of Moab's waste:
"That ye may know the Judgments of the Lord."

Say! what offering shall I bring,
Bowed before Thee, God, my King?
Can ten thousand rams appease Thee?
Oil, like rivers, can it please Thee?
Must I give my first-born son
Ransom for a soul undone?

But He hath shewed thee what is good, O man!
Commanding "Do ye justly, lest ye perish.
"Walk humbly with the Lord thy God; and cherish
"Mercy, His greatest gift, in thy life's little span."



To a Boy
in the Choir of Christ Church.

1.

O LOVELIEST child! (for ne'er, be sure,
Hath aught more perfect, sweet, and pure,
Rested on this inglorious sphere
One fleeting hour his weary wing)
Stay yet a little longer here;
Be not so quick in vanishing!
I know thou wouldst be free; yet stay;
A little more with us delay.
Thine eyes are faint, and pale thy cheek;
But thou art happy though so weak.
No one can hurt thee. Grief and Pain
Will shun that brow, or woo in vain;
And ere thy feet have been beguiled
Out from the fold of infancy,
Time will himself become a child
Once more, and learn to play with thee!

2.

O joy, O deep delight, to watch
Those little coral lips of thine
Shaping their chaunted airs divine:
To see thy blue eyes slowly catch
The raptures of thy kindling song,
And wander upward or along

From grot to grot of blazoned glass,
Through which the mellowed sunbeams pass;
Thy bosom, while the song is breathed,
Beneath that snow-white surplice shaken,
Like lilies when light zephyrs waken;
Thy hands into each other wreathed;
Or, while the Minster's solemn air
Yet murmurs with the anthemed prayer,
Propping that veined and lucid brow
Bent down to meet those echoes low.

3.

How happy must thy brothers be!
Thy sisters, playmates meet for thee!
Yet thou, if right a random guess,
Thou hast no sister and no brother;
Alone in holy loneliness
The comfort of a lonely mother,
Who prayed for thee before thy birth,
And thinks God shaped for thee our earth.
O happy mother! doubly blest,
When, leaning o'er his couch of rest,
You mark that rose upon his cheek,
Now faint as lines of pink that streak
The pearly windings of a shell,
Into a fruit-like richness swell,
The while his breathing spreads perfume
Through all the hushed and curtained room!

4.

Thrice happy mother! every morn
Methinks he wakes thee with his singing;

Cool flowers from dewy graves forlorn
Upon thy widowed bosom flinging!
And it is thine those charms to deck,
To bind the white robe round his neck,
To smooth those silken tresses down,
And hide the auburn in the brown!
To him that Minster's ancient pile,
Which frowns on us with shade austere,
Is nothing strange, but simply dear:
He moves about with gentle smile,
Familiar as the bird that ranges
Through all the high-roofed forest aisle,
Amid the night-wind's mystic changes
Trilling the same sweet song the while!

5.

Unweaned creature! Infant prest
For ever to the Church's breast;
Or lulled, or fondled on her knee,
She is a mother still to thee.
'Tis hers to hear thy sweet confessions
Of easily absolved transgressions;
And with thine own soft ringlets clear
From lids abashed the starting tear.
O! stray not from those holy bowers,
Contented to be still a child:
Were such a meek devotion ours
We too had lingered unbeguiled;
We too had kept that happy part;
Reposed beneath the same wide wing;
And though our lips were mute, our heart—
At least our heart—like thee would sing!

The Planets.

This is the record of a Grecian dream—
A wandering Bard's. As silver stream that bounds
Singing, from rock to rock, when through dark pines
The moonbeams break their javelins on its mail,
So bright, so sweet his pagan songs, poured forth
Full oft at rural festival: but Grace
Came to him, that he scorned his country's gods;
And lived, though late, true bondsman of the Cross.
On Asian shores he strayed while Polycarp
Ruled yet at Smyrna. There his lyre he broke.
This was the last of all the songs he sang.

Of Love, whose golden chain makes all things one;
Of Zeal, which keeps earth pure; of Majesty,
Which, like a crown, steadies the world's great head;
Of Wisdom, which all these tempers and guides;
Of Love, and Zeal, and Majesty, and Wisdom,
Which light, as stars, our mortal night, and give
Limits to Empire, and free space to Good,
Had been my thoughts. Within a bark I lay,
And in a book was reading of the Gods.

Reading, I marvelled how that legend old
Fabled of Truth: how Song, not yet corrupt,
Like a great wave lifted the mind of man,
And gave him ampler prospect. While I mused
The setting sun flamed on the deep; and bells
Pealed from a Church hard by. Loud songs went forth,
As though the Fane itself were singing. Soon
That radiance faded, and the anthem died;
My brow dropped on the volume; and I dreamed.

Methought it was the vigil of that day
When Earth from her deep breast must reproduce
The dead; a host so vast, the kings alone
Shall throng as nations! In a murmuring field
Of harvests by autumnal suns embrowned,
Declining softly to the Western sea
I lay, when night fell, cloud-like, o'er the deep.

An Angel caught me by the hands, and bore me
Far up, and on. Ere long I stood alone
Upon the point of a great promontory:
A Cross was on the edge: from thence a bay
Went back oblique into the heart of Heaven,
And Heaven's mysterious mountains lay between.
I on that Cross had leaned methought an hour,
When from the gloom whereon my eyes reposed
A glorious form, and momently more large,
Emerged with speed divine: beneath his feet,
Which scarcely touched it, was a Planet bent.
I marked it not at first, but thought him flying,
Such joy was from his lustrous forehead poured,
While his bright hair streamed back, both hands uplifted,

As though expectant of some heavenly crown!
Like homeward bark he wound into that bay.
Then came another star; and he thereon
Was like a youthful god: up to his lips
He held a golden shell; calm-faced as one
Who late hath sung, and listens for loud echoes.
Into that haven wound he. Next I saw
A lovely Virgin standing, in white robes
That shone like silver, on the morning star.
She, with one hand, into her bosom pressed
A dove: the other, more than lily, white,
Was ever smoothing down its snowy wings:
And yet on it she gazed not, but on Heaven.
I turned—in shepherd's garb beside me stood
That youth who last had vanished; "Well," he sang,
"Doth Love, without the aid of eyes, assure
"His heart; upon some other heart reposing
"With beatings undistinguished from his own."
She too had passed, when loud I cried, "Declare
"The vision!" "She loved much," the youth replied,
"Therefore to her the star of Love is given.
"But see"—and lo! towards us Mars came moving:
A shield was on his breast: and, raised to Heaven,
Both hands held high a mighty sword that beamed,
From hilt to point with blood incarnadine,
The Cross upon his heart. His helm thrown back,
The warrior's eyes were fixed on that sword's point,
Which from pure ether drew a stream of fire,
And, blazing like an amethystine star,
Poured beatific splendour on his face.
"No other spirit with a deeper joy,"
The youth exclaimed, "from out those crimson urns

" That stand beside the everlasting Altar
" Shall quaff the sacramental wine of Life."
Thus while he spake the Planet disappeared;
And instant o'er his track great Jove advanced,
A kingly shape, and crowned with diamond:
All round his loins a jewelled zone, inwrought
With many symbols, like the zodiac clung;
The brightest sphere of Heaven beneath his feet:
And he was sceptred. " Lo! how soon," exclaimed
That joyous youth, " doth Victory and Empire
" Tread in the bloody steps of Martyrdom!
" Go forth, great King!" and Jupiter passed by.
Then all was still: and slowly, like a sound
So faint we know not when begins its tremor,
Forth from the darkness the Saturnian star
Began to move. An old man knelt thereon
With prophet robes, and face depressed and pale,
In hue like that which vaporous Autumn breathes
On the dim gold of her discoloured forests.
He bent his plaited brow and tawny beard
O'er a short bar clasped tight in both his hands—
" Lo," cried that youth, " the hoary might of Time!
" The Linker of the End to the Beginning.
" Ever he bends that bar, his iron sceptre,
" Into a cirque, type of Eternity,
" And crown for the most worthy: when 'tis wrought,
" Time's hard and iron sway is gone for ever."
As Saturn passed, methought a wan smile lay
Hid in his sallow cheek: at last I cried,
" O tell me what these are, and what art thou?"
" These are the Planets," spake the youth, "and they
" Who ride them are the loftiest soul of each,

" By Faith raised up to ride those glittering orbs.
" The first that passed was Earth, thine ancient home.
" The third was Venus, in the solar beam
" That bathes, as water-lily in clear waters;
" Her children are a choir of loving spirits
" Lying on violet banks, by tuneful streams:
" There, on the plume-like trees the wind blows gently,
" For ever gently: not a mother there
" Would fear to rock her new-born infant's cradle
" Upon the topmost bough. Of these a few
" On earth have dwelt; and striven to lure thy race
" To love—nor long their exile; by the sword
" Hewn down, or trampled under foot of men.
" The next was Mars: there dwell a race heroic
" Warring on evil. Ofttimes to the earth,
" Oppressed by tyrants, one of these descended,
" Breaker of chains. The star of Jupiter
" Unto imperial spirits doth belong:
" There, o'er its sea-like levels rise their thrones
" Like pyramids o'er Nilus kenned. On earth
" Men stared in wonder at their haughty feet,
" That trod your Planet like a thing foredoomed.
" In Saturn dwell the Prophets, far apart,
" 'Mid deathless groves, and caves in sequence hollowed
" Within the walls of the precipitous mountains.
" Before them, like a veil, from heights unknown
" The noiseless torrents stream, scarce pierced by beams
" From seven broad moons, and cast an awful shade
" On those who sit within; their wrinkled foreheads
" Bending o'er emblemed scrolls and books of Fate.
" Of these but few have ever been on earth.
" Mortal! in Heaven was concord thus with men!

" Love, Zeal heroic, Majesty, and Wisdom,
" There where ye guessed not lived and wrought and reigned.
" In seats by Pagan fancies long usurped
" They wound their choral dances thus round earth.
" Men their own greatness knew not; but exchanged
" For dust, celestial sympathy." He spake,
And light flashed from him that made all things plain!
" Tell me," I said, " thy name." " I am," he answered,
" The shaping instinct of the universe,
" By bards of old named Hermes. I bestow
" Voice on all being; I of every art
" Am father; earlier, in lone wastes I cry,
" Scaring those Demons that in dance obscene
" Trample to mire of clay the heart of man,
" Which should be singing ever, like this shell
" Whose warbling wakes the Planets: they henceforth
" Have rest:—but hark their sabbath song." He raised
The shell, and straight a harmony, so rich
It seemed the blending of all lovely voices,
Moved o'er us, like one wave that fills a bay:
And 'mid that Pæan murmuring I could hear
A low deep music, tremulent though sweet,
With that Eolian anthem sink and rise.
" My task is done," it said;
" My wrinkled hands have rest; the crown is made:
" But who of earth can wear it?
" Whose brows are strong and broad enough to bear it?
" Let him speak, let him speak,
" For my veins are waxing weak;
" These eyes no longer can their vigils keep,
" My lids are growing heavy—I must sleep."

A sound that quelled all other sounds, as stars
At sunrise, shook my heart; and I beheld
Upon another, and a larger sphere
Than all which yet had passed, an old man standing.
Older than all the prophets looked that man:
Sea-sands could number not his youth! His hair
And beard rolled foam-like down his breast, and glittered
Like snow when Boreal lights from polar skies
Shine keen on icy streams and spangled woods.
O'er his calm face bright thoughts went sweeping ever
Like gleams from rippling waters heaved o'er rocks:
His eyes seemed yet to hold those vanished stars—
I closed my own; and when I dared to look
He had not wound into the bay, but passed
Right onward to the North. "His task is done,
"His vigil ended! many thoughts he hath,
"And marvel not, for he hath much beheld,"
The youth exclaimed; "but lean your ear once more
"Down to this shell, and hear him what he speaks
"With that crystalline bass, which like a sea
"Ingulfs all other sounds, or lets them float
"As bubbles on the surface." I replied,
"Not so! I will not hear him lest I die."
And in my terror woke.—

The Moralist and Religionist.

1.

" You grant that in man's natural heart
" Those virtues bud and blow
" Which Faith pretends to give ; and Art
" In empty types would shew.
" Great Nature must I then desert ?
" Reject her gifts ?" Not so.

2.

Such flowers, where'er you find them, cull :
But pardon those who cry,
" The Good is like the Beautiful,
" It blossoms but to die."—
And yet Christ came not to annul
Such natural piety.

3.

He came to strengthen what is good,
Yet here grows weak and dies :
The life we cannot lead, yet would,
He came to realize :
To wash it in atoning blood,
And crown it in the skies !

4.

Sell all thou hast, and purchase this!
And count it cheap to buy
With merits, Pride alone can miss,
Faith, Hope, and Charity;
With dreams of man his Maker's bliss,
With dust those worlds on high!

St. Mary Magdalene.

1.

Say, who that woman kneeling lone
  Amid yon desert bare?
The cold rain beats her bosom,
  The night-wind lifts her hair—
It is the holy Magdalene,
  O listen to her prayer.
    "Lord, I have prayed since eventide:
      "And Midnight now hath spread
    "Her mournful pall abroad o'er all
      "The living and the dead.
    "The stars each moment shine more large,
      "Down-gazing from the skies—
    "O Father of the sorrowful,
      "Turn thus on me Thine eyes!"

2.

Hark, thunder shakes the cliff far off!
  The woods in lightning glare;
The eagle shivers in her nest,
  The lion in his lair:
And yet, now trembling and now still,
  She makes the same sad prayer.
    "Lord of the sunshine and the storm!
      "The darkness and the day!
    "Why should I fear if Thou art near?
      "And Thou art near alway!

" Thus, in the wilderness, Thy Son
" Was tempted, Lord, by Thee :
" He triumphed in that awful strife—
" O let Him plead for me."

3.

How often must that woman pray ?
How long kneel sighing there ?
O joy to see the Holy Cross
Clasped to a breast so fair !—
Speak louder, blessed Magdalene,
And let me join thy prayer.
" Lord ! Thou hast heard my plaints all night :
" And now the airs of morn
" My forehead fan, my temples wan,
" My face, and bosom worn !
" O! o'er my weak and wildered soul,
" Make thus Thy spirit move ;
" That I may feel the light once more,
" And answer love with love !"

Adam[a] refuses the Presents of the Evil Race.

1.

Enthroned, and mantled in a snow-white robe,
Man's sire I saw, the Lord of all the globe;
High-priest of all the Church, and prophet sure
Of Him, whose promised kingdom shall endure
Until the last of Adam's kind is dead.
Nor crown, nor mitre rested on his head,
Yet kings with awe had viewed him! Sweet and slow
His speech; the words I knew not, nor could know:
But wept to hear, amid their golden sound,
A melancholy echo from the ground.
Ages were flown since Adam's lifted hand
Had plucked, in mockery of Divine command,
That fruit, a sacrament of death, which gave
Perpetual life a forfeit to the grave.
Yet still those orbs, their Maker once that saw,
Governed the nations of the world with awe:
Mournful they looked, as though their sorrowing weight
Reposed for aye on Eden's closing gate;
Mournful, yet lustrous still those lordly eyes,
First mortal mirror of the earth and skies;

[a] The arts and sciences were invented by the descendants of Cain, who were the first to build cities, wage wars, and substitute complicated systems of society for the Patriarchal.

And still with piercing insight filled, as when
All new-made creatures passed beneath their ken,
While he decreed, in his celestial speech,
Prophetic names symbolical for each.
All round, checkering the steep with giant shade,
His mild and venerable race were laid,
For dance and song no wreaths as yet had won:
Many their strong eyes bent upon the sun;
Some on a sleeping infant's smiling face,
Wherein both Love and Faith were strong to trace
The destined patriarch of a future race!

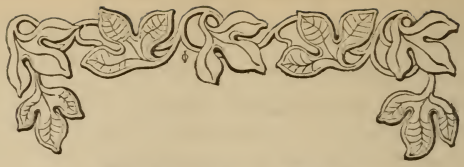
2.

But see, more gaily than those Elders clad,
A herald from afar, a shepherd lad!
Wondering he moved; and then, like one afraid,
A tribute at those feet monarchal laid,
A Lyre, gem-dowered from many a vanished isle.
Thereon the Father gazed without a smile:
But some fair children with the bright toy played;
While sound so rapturous thrilled the echoing glade,
That Seers, cave-hid, looked up with livelier cheer,
And the first childless mother wiped away a tear!

3.

Next came, with hastier footstep from afar,
A man all armed, a warrior fresh from war.
Dark was his face, yet bright; and stern as though
It bent o'er that of an expiring foe,
Retorting still, with sympathetic glare,
The imprecating anguish imaged there!

A tribute too that warrior brought, a shield
Graven with emblems of a bloody field,
And placed it at the Patriarch's feet, and spoke.
" Certain Oppressors reared an impious yoke,
" And passed beneath it brethren of their race;
" Therefore we rose, and hewed them from their place."
All pale the patriarch sat—long time his eye
Fixed on the deepening crimson of the sky,
Where sanguine clouds contended with the dun:
Then turned, and whispered in the ear of one,
Who, on his death-bed, whispered to his son,
And the same saw the Deluge!



Fragments on Truth.

THE SEARCH.

The Way, the Truth, the Life! Ah! would that they
Who follow Truth, pursued it by that way
Which Truth itself hath 'stablished, and made broad!
Christ is the Truth: and Christ alone the road.
"To him that doth My will, to him alone,"
Thus saith the Lord of Truth, "will I be known."
To him that follows Truth in peace not strife,
Truth will become the mystic seed of life.
A little while we seek for Truth; and then
Earthward we stoop, and seek ourselves again.
We ask for knowledge, and we ask for fame,
For mental beauty masked in Truth's great name;
An exercise for strength, a bait for wit,
A mark for boastful skill, unprized when hit,
For all but Truth. On earth condemned to roam,
Unloved, or else ill-loved, Truth sighs for home,
Because we are unlike her. Truth is one,
But we like dust divided, thence undone:
And Truth is spiritual; she appears
Only to spiritual eyes and ears.
Too proud for aid, for self-support too weak,
Thou neither knowest, O man, to find her, nor to seek!

Ye, who for Truth are clamouring, first declare,
Her light to you if granted, could ye bear?

Each flattering dream abjure, each coloured ray,
And face life's statue in its awful grey?
Even then a thousand bars obstruct your way!
Courage he needs, the aspiring strength of faith,
Who seeks for light in darkness, life in death;
And love he needs, whose open eyelids keep
Vigil eternal in a world of sleep;
And hope, the virgin valour of a breast
Which reaps in action a sublimer rest;
Meekness he needs, for ofttimes he shall find
Truth's broken beams in lowliest dews enshrined;
And purity, for he as oft must mount,
And seek them sparkling in their heavenly fount;
Patience he needs to wait, and zeal to meet
The earliest light of her celestial feet;
Humility, her sov'reign crown to wear
With awe—for oft success becomes our deadliest snare.

NOVELTY AND PRACTICAL UNBELIEF.

That Truth, whose strangeness chiefly lured us on,
Upon the palate palls, as soon as known.
We hold, yet have it not; with jealous care
Guarding the treasure we no more can share.
We feel it going; dare not let it fly;
And, in our anguish, scarce have power to cry
"O for the plaints, the prayers of long ago,
"That what the heart believed the mind might know:
"Now, and henceforth, with hopeless pain we grieve
"That, what we know, we can no more believe!
"So ill may Truth assuage a selfish thirst—
"So much our latter state is sharper than our first."

UNITY OF OBJECTIVE TRUTH.

Truths are but relative; and day by day,
Assume new phases while they waste away:
But Truth is absolute and whole; one heart,
One soul, one spirit, all in every part.
Her vesture Truth divides not; she bestows
All on her votaries, nothing on her foes.
Plunderers! for favorite truths who spoil Truth's stem!
Alas for you—those truths—alas for them!
Torn from the tree, erelong they lose their bloom,
Poor faded chaplets on the spoiler's tomb:
And of their leaves decaying or decayed,
The poison draughts of future times are made!

Archbishop Leighton.

1.

"A GLOOMY strain he sang," men say;
But sweetest song-birds love not day.
"He said that man was weak and vile;"
But tears were on his cheek the while.
"A heart diseased; a wicked will"—
Yet O! he loved his brethren still!

2.

Autumnal air, through all the year,
He breathed; and held it doubly dear.
He felt, as Adam might, if he
Had tasted, sole, that deathless tree,
And watched with sad, immortal eyes,
Autumnal tints in Paradise!

3.

A gentle sadness evermore
Where'er he went, the Wanderer bore:
Through palace-gardens weed-o'ergrown
He seemed to range, and range alone:
And yet, (so pure he lived from care)
Full seventy years left black his hair!

4.

Bard, Statesman, Sage, he might have been,
A name, from age to age, I ween:
But future things, and past, he saw
Obedient to the same great law.
The poor man's tomb grows out of date;
He wished to share the poor man's fate.

Spiritual Guidance.

We all the old sad tale have heard
Of babes, in that lone wood who perished;
And of the sweet and pious bird,
Their leaf-strewn grave that cherished.

Hark, children, to a tale as true:
And if you catch its meaning, pray
As kind a friend to wait on you,
And guide you on your way.

Where'er my pilgrim footsteps rove
These labyrinthine forests wide,
A little, silver-pinioned dove
Attends me as my guide!

There's sunshine wheresoe'er she moves;
She wafts upon her wings a freight
Of lustre through the faded groves,
And pine-boughs desolate.

Sometimes, to chide the laggard Spring,
Beyond my feeble sight she flies:
But then a feather from her wing
Oft dropt, her place supplies!

Returning, in her pearlèd beak
A branch of some blest fruit she bears ;
And thus, when cold I grow, or weak,
My failing strength repairs.

Nor doubt I, with her gracious aid,
To reach, ere yet my life is o'er,
The shrine with light divine arrayed
In this grey forest's core.

O wanderers in a darker maze!
If such a guide our steps attend,
Why walk ye up and down the ways
Of evil without end?

Association of Ideas.

1.

"Those destined Thoughts that haunt my breast,
"And throb, and heave, and swell,
"Impatient of their painful rest,
"And state invisible,
"Those Thoughts at last must meet the day,
"And with me dwell, or on me prey:
"On me, on me those Thoughts must call,
"And act, and live, and move abroad—
"I am the mother of them all:
"Be Thou their Father, God!"

2.

Thus prayed I; musing on that law
By which the children of the brain
Their linked generations draw
(A melancholy train)
From moods long past, which feigned to die;
But in whose quickening ashes lie
Immortal seeds of pain or pleasure
No foot can crush, no will control,
No craft transmute, no prescience measure—
Dread harvests of the ripening soul!

We seek; but find not: be it so.
O blest for ever be that love,
Which, lulled by nothing here below,
Raises, perforce, its eyes above!

Love thy God, and love Him only:
And thy breast will ne'er be lonely.
In that one great Spirit meet
All things mighty, grave, and sweet.
Vainly strives the soul to mingle
With a being of our kind:
Vainly hearts with hearts are twined;
For the deepest still is single.
An impalpable resistance
Holds like natures still at distance.
Mortal! love that Holy One!
Or dwell for aye alone.

Angel! beneath whose steadfast wings
The Earth revolves her wanderings;
Behold, that ancient nurse of man
Is wearied, withered, palsied, wan!
A serpent o'er her bosom crept:
A serpent stung her while she slept:
A serpent's poison taints her blood!
Therefore their wisdom mocks the wise:
Corruption near perfection lies:
Ill ends the work that well began—
Wave once thy mighty wings, and fan
The Evil from the Good!

Humanity.

1.

Earth's green expanse: her dawn's one wave of light:
Her soft winds creeping o'er the forest tall:
Her silence; and the comfort of her night—
Are these then all?
All thou canst give to me,
Humanity?

2.

Tears running down the track of buried smiles:
Time's shades condensed into the sable pall:
Hope that deserts; and Gladness that beguiles—
Are these then all?
All thou canst give to me,
Humanity?

3.

I saw a Spirit dart 'twixt Earth and Heaven,
Holding a cup in both hands lest it fall—
O friends! a mournful life to us were given,
If Earth were all!
But he who lives for aye hath looked on thee,
Humanity.

TO ——.

O WASH thine eyes with many a bitter tear;
And all things shall grow clear.
Bend that proud forehead nearer to the ground;
And catch a far foot's sound.
Say! wouldst thou know what faithful suppliants feel?
Thou, too, even thou, must kneel.
Do thy part well; and ask not why or how:
Religion is a Vow.
They sang not idle songs; pledges they made
For thee, an infant, laid
In the Church's lucid bosom. These must thou
Fulfil, or else renounce! Fulfil them *now*.
A Cross, and not a wreath was planted on thy brow.

Religious Hypochondria.

Forward, a step or two, where'er we go,
We gaze; not on the spot our feet are treading:
Reading, we look along, or glance below,
Unconscious of the letters we are reading.
The Future moulds the Present. Do not halt
To probe, or mourn, each felt, or fancied fault;
"Steadfast by Faith," who treads where Hope hath trod,
Following her winged Sister to the throne of God!

Liberalism.

1.

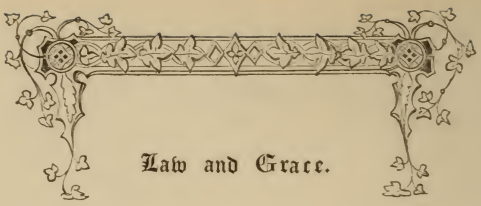
"Let them alone," men cry.
"I lie, thou liest, they lie:
"What then? Thy neighbour's folly hurts not thee!"
Error is Freedom! such the insensate shout
Of crowds that, like a Pæan, hymn a Doubt:
Indifference thus the world calls Charity.

2.

Charity mourns the sin it doth condemn;
Condemns the sin it weeps for: and reproves
The more, the more it loves.
Those whom it loves it heals—
Zeal for its God it feels;
Pity for them.

3.

"Battles at last shall cease."
At last, not now: we are not yet at home.
The time is coming, it will soon be come,
When those who dare not fight
For God, or for the right,
Shall fight for peace!



Law and Grace.

1.

It is not true, that unto us, enrolled
Within Christ's band, the Law exists no longer:
But this is true; that we, who sank of old,
Oppressed beneath that armory of gold,
Sustain it now in glory, being stronger!

2.

The Form remains: but is a form no more
To eyes inspired, that see
Through bondage Liberty;
And, in His earthly shape, their God adore.
To Love all things are Love:
To Grace all things are Grace:
And humble Faith can never move
In an unholy place!

3.

Within, but not beneath the Law we dwell.
That wall, of old our prison's circuit, now
(Girding the citied mountain's sov'reign brow)
Is but the bulwark of man's citadel.
Large views beyond are given:
Safe views of all the earth; and healing airs of Heaven.

4.

Within the Temple of the Law we stand;
As once without it stood
That awe-struck multitude;
And on the marble Tables lay our hand.
There, like the vested Priest, our God we meet:
And stand up boldly by the Mercy-Seat.

TO ———.

1.

Couldst thou but keep each noble thought
Thou fling'st in words away,
With quiet then thy night were fraught,
With glory crowned thy day.
But thou too idly and too long
From bower to bower hast ranged;
And Nature, trifled with, not loved,
Will be at last avenged!

2.

With pleasure oft, but ne'er with awe
Thou gazest on the skies.
And from thy lips all zephyrs draw
Their amplest harmonies.
Beware! the hour is coming fast,
When every warbled tone,
That brims our hearts with joy, shall yield
No sweetness to thine own.

Imitated from Prudentius[a].

Down with those puerile gauds, those pomps outworn,
That mock the mighty Church they should adorn!
Go! from your statues wash the gold and paint:
Pure let them stand, O Pontiff—King or Saint!
Those ritual types of ancient thoughts sublime
To idols changed by custom and by time,
Restore them to themselves, restore them to their prime!

Rome, March 20, 1839.

Power to forego, and seek for pleasure,
Is wise; and yet a costlier treasure,
By us unsought, were ours, if we
But entertained it worthily.
Heavy the crown of gold! yea flowers
Themselves weigh down these brows of ours.
The lightest crown by mortal worn
Was braided of the painful thorn!

---

[a] "Deponas jam festa velim puerilia, ritus
"Ridiculos, tantoque indigna sacraria regno.
"Marmora tabenti respergine tincta lavate:
"O Proceres, liceat Statuas consistere puras!
"Artificum magnorum opera, hæc pulcherrima nostro
"Ornamenta cluant patriæ; nec decolor usus
"In vitium versæ monumenta coinquinat artis."

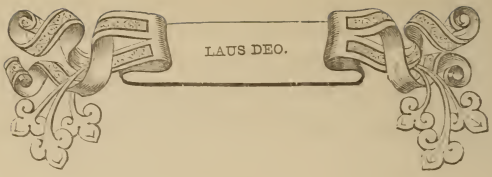
An Epitaph.

Why number days and years ill spent?
The course of millions why recall?
O gentle stranger! be content:
My tale is but the tale of all.

The evil ways I found but rough:
I found a Saviour strong to save.
O stranger! ask no more—enough.
From thee a prayer is all I crave.

Alms.

Speak to the end, poor Orphan. I
Am poor—thou canst not poorer be:
Yet, having nought to give thee, why
That nothing give ungraciously.



Inscriptions for Way-side Fountains and Oratories.

By this rude altar, gentle guest!
Repose: and, resting, pray that rest
Abide, through all eternity,
With him who reared it; and with thee.

In this cool shadow, grateful guest!
Repose, and humbly drink;
And muse on Him who found no rest:
And now, and always think
Of that, His last great thirst, which He
Endured for those thou lov'st, and thee.

Beneath the Cross upsprings the Fount;
And Heaven bends wide above.
Delve as you may, O friend, or mount,
Nought else you find but Love.

As o'er the marble brink you lean,
  This Well, glad guest, becomes your mirror.
May every glass in which are seen
Your spirit's face, your moral mien,
    Cause you as little terror.

Subsiding now, those waters bright
  Thine own face offer to thy view.
May every well of pure delight
  Yield thee thy Maker's too.

Rites and Ceremonies.

Mere inward Feelings, self-supplanted, perish.
Things outward, void of spirit, ne'er had life:
Then, either class who prizes, both must cherish;
And learn to harmonize their natural strife.
Christ, that in Heaven our visible nature wears,
Permits the union, consecrates it, shares:
And man with his own heart must be at one
Who lives with God in genuine unison.
The electric flame, by which, through air dispersed,
All life of herb or animal is nursed,
Consumes us, when compacted and intense!
Spirit we are: yet spirit bound in Sense:
In Sense fast bound, though working daily through,
'Till Sense grows Spirit to the Spirit's eye—
But Faith drops low, when Fancy soars too high:
We cannot clasp a rosary of dew!

The Rainbow.

The Bow of God is bent on high—
But where the Archer, where the Arrow?
What heavenly vengeance glitters nigh,
Pursuing Sin with Sorrow?
Make answer, men! God's pardoned foes!
With bosom bare confessing
No shafts so deeply pierce as those
Which Love on hearts that trust her throws—
Pity—Forgiveness—Blessing!

A Traveller's Grace.

Take, pretty birds—to you these crumbs are given,
Your portion of our meal ere yet begun:
And waft our thanks in melody to Heaven
Should we forget them, when that meal is done.

Death.

The cold is in my heart:
To earth declines my head:
Death points thereat his dart.
But Life, O Christ, Thou art
To quick and dead.

I will not ask delay.
I will not shrink or sigh.
Be Thou alone my stay.
Come Thou: Thou know'st the way:
Thou too didst die.

The Dark became as Light
When Christ in Hades trod.
The throne below of Night
Thy brow that hour made bright:
Death owned Thee God.

Death trembled. Death and Hell
Gave up with awe their prey.
Thy ransom'd knew Thee well.
On earth though yet I dwell
I am as they.

With them my watch I keep:
I feel my Saviour there.
With Adam now I leap
Forth from the penal Deep
Of my despair.

With patriarch Saints I gaze
Upon Thy light afar.
Lift up my hands in praise:
Yea, wash me in the rays
Of Thy bright star.

My chains fall off; I rise:
Th' eternal night is riven.
With Christ to earth I rise:
And on into the skies:
And up to Heaven.

Songs.

I.

1.

Her sable tresses swelled more bright:
New beams her dark eyes flung:
Upon her purple vest the light
Changed, shifting with her song.
Her breath like flame, now went, now came:
Strange joy her pulses shook:
While face and form gleamed wild and warm,
Like a bather's from a brook.

2.

She sang the Martyrs of the Faith!
As loud as Angel choirs
She sang the songs which they in death
Hurled, fire-like, through their fires!
But now more slow her murmurs flow:
Her smiles serenely play,
Like light on leaves a breath upheaves,
Upheaves to meet the day.

3.

Sing, sing for ever, Music's child!
While hearts long parched and sear
Re-open fresh and undefiled,
And Syrian saints draw near.

Benignant airs! all wintry cares
Thy songs before them roll!
Auspicious winds! their grace unbinds
The field-flowers of the soul!

II.

Within the crowded fane she knelt,
As if before God's throne:
Nought heard, saw nought; alone she felt:
Alone with Christ alone.

Amid the desert knelt the maid;
Alone, yet not alone;
Praying with all that ever prayed
Before the eternal Throne.

Now upward, down as oft she gazed,
In holiest hope and fear;
With every bead to Heaven she raised
She dropped to earth a tear.

The lily she kissed, but dared not pluck;
It was sacred to her Lord:
Yet she that gave the young lions suck
The maiden's feet adored.

No wealth was hers in fields or flocks;
The poor had all her gold:
But honey gushed from the sunny rocks,
And in milk the streamlet rolled.

O blissful maid, through light and shade
So bright a path was thine;
Round hill and glade thy lustre played,
And still o'er earth doth shine!

III.

ST. CECILIA'S SONG.

Lie mute henceforward, Lyre and Harp!
Far Pipe, and airy horn—
Even they too sudden sound, too sharp,
To hymn the Virgin-born.

The heart alone, fit instrument,
Its vernal chaunt can raise
Unblamed to join the pure concent
Of Angel-echoed praise.

O for a voice that like the gush
Of Love to Heaven might swell;
And yet in mystery hide, and hush
What words should never tell!

With eye abashed, and murmur low,
We name the name most dear:
When most with holy Love we glow,
Most trembles holy Fear.

Alone the Maiden sat, when o'er
Her fell the Sacred Shade!
Alone the mystic Babe she bore,
And in the manger laid.

Breathe softly then each awful note—
How low, how soft soe'er,
Its sound, to God the praise will float
Uplifted by the prayer.

IV.

MARTHA AND MARY.

1.

"O Sister! leave you thus undone
"The bidding of the Lord?
"Or call you this a welcome? Run,
"And deck with me the board."
Thus Martha spake: but spake to one
Who answered not a word:
For she kept ever singing,
"There is no joy so sweet
"As musing upon him we love;
"And sitting at his feet!"

2.

O Sister! must my hands alone
His board and bath prepare?
His eyes are on you! raise your own:
He'll find a welcome there!
Thus spake again, in loftier tone
That Hebrew woman fair.
But Mary still kept singing,
"There is no joy so sweet,
"As musing upon him we love;
"And resting at his feet!"

V.

CHRISTIAN CHIVALRY.

1.

A NOBLE band! Their snow-white steeds
Strike fire and music from the ground;
Each Knight is golden-armed, and each
Above his helmet crowned.
From regions of the orient Morn,
More swift than sunrise these are borne;
And westward while they sweep, behind
A wake of jubilant sound swells up along the wind!

2.

Whence come they? whither do they ride?
On whom, and why wage war?
From God they come: and back to Him
They go. What seek ye more?

One Kingdom each and all prepare ;
One Will in every heart they bear ;
On all their standards one great Name—
O Christian! thou dost bear the same!

VI.

1.

Go, put the shoes from off thy feet!
  The earth is holy ground ;
As many Angels there as men
  (Since each hath one) are found.
Who made the worlds breathed once our air,
And left immortal freshness there!

2.

Go, put the shoes from off thy feet!
  The earth is holy ground ;
Holy the Temple-dome above :
  Holy the light around—
O Earth from Chaos raised! of thee
At last an Eden born shall be!

VII.

1.

Our vale of Life at either end
Is spanned by gates of gold;
And when the wind against them strains,
Such harmony is rolled
From every echoing valve and bar
Right on through all the vale afar,
That cliffs, and woods, the air, the ground,
With rapture tremble in the sound.

2.

This Earth is not so far from Heaven:
Bright Angels from the skies,
Seen or unseen, it matters not,
Descend: and prayers uprise.
Deep Sabbath of the trusting breast,
The solstice of a realm of rest,
Rich antepasts we have in thee
Of glory and eternity!

VIII.

1.

Against my cheek a breath was playing,
I felt it raise my hair;
And then was shaped its gradual music
To one slow word—"Beware."
A breeze it came, to haunt yet cheer;
Its sweetness robbed my heart of fear.

2.

"Beware, because the sun shines brightly,
"Because the flowers are fair;
"Thus bright, thus gay were bowers of Eden,
"While danced that fruit in air,
"And waved o'er Eve's uplifted brow—
"As life o'er thee is waving now."

Song

FOR THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION.

"*A pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons.*"

SOLE in a cedar-girdled vale,
Lone rocks and mighty streams among,
A dove sang like the nightingale;
And this the spirit of her song.

1

Love, from Sorrow disunited
Weeps no more a beauty blighted;
Love and Constancy no more,
Inharmonious fates deplore.
Love and Joy at last are met,
And tangled in a bridal net:
For our earth hath been partaker
Of the presence of her Maker!

2.

Who that wondrous joy may tell,
Virgin Mother! when thine eyes
On the new-born Infant fell?
I alone can sing thereof:
I, the little primal dove!
Happier I than she that erst
The olive found; or she, the first
That cooed, and loved in Paradise!

3.

Boast no longer, nightingale!
Songs that shake the watery vale,
Till, like wings, the dark leaves shiver,
And lights o'er all the dew-wreaths quiver—
Sailing through the crimson west,
Swan! no more that wild hymn vaunt,
Which makes the clouds of sunset pant,
And fans the flame on Hesper's crest!

4.

I a loftier strain can sing,
"Love o'er all things Lord and King."
While I chaunt it, myrtles flower;
O'er rough ocean rose-leaves shower;
Sunless caves beneath are glowing;
Deep-mouthed shells with song o'erflowing:
Angels carol: and the earth
Moves in livelier measures forth!

5.

Jubilate, Jubilate!
Heaven descends, O Earth, to mate ye!
Sing, ye Torrents! all night o'er us,
Sing, ye Stars, our Burthen's Chorus!
Jubilate, Jubilate!
Everlasting joys await ye,
Sorrowing mortals, weak and worn—
Sing in triumph, "Christ is born!"

Hymns

FOR THE CANONICAL HOURS.

I.

(FOR NOON.)

"*The Earth is the Lord's.*"

1.

LORD of the Lords of all the earth!
Lord of the souls of men!
From Thee all heavenly gifts have birth;
To Thee return again!

2.

The lightnings flashed from off Thy throne,
Fill Heaven and Earth with light;
And by that living flame alone,
Men read the world aright.

3.

On every crown and sceptre shed,
Thy beams of glory shine;
And burn round every Father's head,
That rules by right Divine.

4.

The Priests by thee anointed, stand
Beside his altar, each;
And all the Wise, a Prophet-band,
What Thou hast taught them teach.

5.

And those who heal the sick, and those
Who plead for the distressed,
Or guard the land from godless foes,
By Thee are sent, and blessed.

6.

Thy voice, O Father, rolls around
The world for evermore;
The speech we know not, but the sound
In silence we adore.

7.

The Heavens themselves repose thereon:
Thereon the Earth is stayed:
And seasons change, and rivers run,
By Thee ordained and swayed.

8.

The fearful of their cunning boast:
The haughty of their sword:
But we, and all the Heavenly Host
Will glory in the Lord.

Glory to God the Father;
Glory to God the Son;
And Glory to the Holy Ghost;
Th' eternal Three in One.

II.

(*For Three p. m.*)

PEACE.

1.

We lead a gentle life below :
Our days, that seem to pass,
Glide on and blend—before Thy throne
Thus spreads the sea of glass.

2.

One image fills that crystal sea,
One light o'er all doth shine :
Yet every separate drop hath power,
That radiance to enshrine.

3.

Nor less in unity and light
Meek brethren, we abide ;
" Like drops of Hermon's dew," that still
Into each other slide.

4.

Eternal glory, thanks and praise
To Thee, O God, to Thee,
Who buildest all the peace of men,
Upon that prime decree :

5.

That he who loves the Lord his God,
Should hold all creatures dear ;
And whoso fears his God, henceforth
Should feel no baser fear.

Glory to God forever,
From Angels and from men;
The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
For evermore. Amen.

III.

(*For Six p. m.*)

1.

"He giveth His beloved sleep."
The haughty sow the wind:
The storm they sow; the tempest reap;
But rest they cannot find.

2.

In sleep itself their furrowed brows,
That care-worn mark retain;
Avenger of the guilt it shews,
The curse and brand of Cain!

3.

Rest is of God—He doth not sleep;
But while His children rest,
His hand outstretched, and still doth keep
O'er earth, their shadowed nest.

4.

His holy Angels chaunt around,
To chase dark dreams away;
That slumbers innocent and sound,
May leave serene the day.

Glory to God forever,
From Angels and from men:
The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
For evermore. Amen.

IV.

(*For Nine p. m.*)

1.

In that cold cave with spices sweet
When Christ, our Lord, lay dead,
An Angel sat beside His feet,
An Angel by His head.

2.

All night their eyes to Heaven they raised,
(Their wings all round Him spread)
All day on those shut eyelids gazed—
But not a word they said.

3.

And when the morn sabbatical
Its glorious light had spread
A chrysome robe o'er Earth's dark ball,
To Heaven those Angels sped.

4.

Keep, holy Angels, keep, O keep
Such vigil by our bed:
Calm visions from the urns of sleep,
O'er us calm visions shed!

5.

But when we wake to morning life,
And night's pure calm is fled ;
Stay near us in our daily strife,
Or we are worse than dead!

Glory to God the Father,
The Son, and Holy Ghost,
Henceforth for ever from mankind,
And from the heavenly Host.

V.

(*For Midnight.*)

1.

The stars shine bright while earth is dark!
While all the woods are dumb
How clear those far off silver chimes
From tower and turret come!

2.

Chilly but sweet the midnight air:
And lo! with every sound,
Down from the ivy-leaf a drop
Falls glittering to the ground.

3.

'Twas night when Christ was born on earth ;
Night heard His faint, first cry ;
While Angels carolled round the star
Of the Epiphany.

4.

Alas! and is our love too weak
To meet Him on His way?
To pray for nations in their sleep?
For Love then let us pray!

5.

Pray for the millions slumbering now:
The sick, who cannot sleep:
O may those sweet sounds waft them thoughts
As peaceful, and as deep.

6.

Pray for the idle, and the vain:
O may that pure-toned bell
Disperse the Demon Powers of Air,
And evil Dreams dispel!

7.

Pray for the aged, and the poor;
The crown-encompassed head;
The friends of youth, now far away;
The dying; and the dead.

8.

And ever let us wing our prayer
With praise: and ever say
Glory to God, who makes the night
Benignant as the day!

Glory to God forever,
The Father, and the Son,
And Thee, O Holy Ghost, by whom
All things are knit in one.

VI.

(*For Three a. m.*)

1.

A low sweet voice from out the brake
Provoked a loud reply:
Now half the birds are half awake,
They feel the morning nigh.

2.

Now, fainting 'neath her load of dreams,
The Moon inclines her brows,
Expectant, towards those mightier beams
That grant her toils repose.

3.

Long streaks, the prophets of the Sun,
Illume the dusk, grey hill:
But still the heart of Heaven is dun;
The day is virgin still!

4.

O Christ! ere yet beheld on earth,
How oft, incarnate Word,
Thy Prophets heralded Thy birth!
Alas, how seldom heard!

5.

Rise, holy Brethren, rise, and sing
A prayer: and while we pray,
The morn shall fan with heavenly wing
Our lethargy away.

6.

Burst Thou, O God, these chains of flesh!
These languid eyes inspire:
Our spirits make as morning fresh,
And pure as solar fire:

7.

And grant us, fronting thus the East,
When all the heavenly Powers
Come forth to deck the bridal feast,
A place among Thy bowers!

8.

Come, Lord and Master! come and take
At last Thy ransomed home:
Bid all Thy faithful dead awake—
And may Thy Kingdom come!

Glory to God the Father,
Glory to God the Son,
And glory to the Holy Ghost,
'Till time be past and done.

VII.

(*For Six a. m.*)

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

1.

With virgin heart, undazzled eye,
The Virgin-born went on,
Each snare surmounted or passed by,
Until His task was done.

2.

With bleeding feet, but lifted head,
The waste of life He trod:
Tinging, each step, with blushing red,
The consecrated sod.

3.

Those steps our earth doth yet retain:
And when dark vapours hide
That Sun which lights our pilgrim-train,
She too can be our guide.

4.

Father of Him and us! Thy grace
On us and all bestow
Who seek the goal He sought, to trace
His footmarks here below!

5.

O joy to follow Him in hope,
For days, for months, for years:
Our steps in turn o'er His to drop;
And o'er His blood our tears!

Glory to God the Father
From Angels, and from men,
The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
For evermore. Amen.

VIII.

(*For Nine a. m.*)

TO THE SPIRIT.

1.

The wind rang out from depths of woods,
And pealed through valleys bent
Among the curving hills like tubes
Of some vast instrument.
Its sound we heard; but know not whence
It came, or whither went.

2.

The wind upon our forehead blows.
In gleams of lambent flame
The sunbeams flash from wave and leaf:
The hour is now the same
As when to Christ's anointed Twelve
That promised Spirit came.

3.

The sound as of a rushing wind
Before His wings He flung:
And leaped on those uplifted brows
In many a flaming tongue!—
O breathe on us Thy seven-fold powers:
O dwell our hearts among!

4.

Live Thou in Christ's mysterious Vine,
Until her branches spread
Among the stars—to them as flowers
'Mid locks of one new-wed:
And clasp, in their descending arch,
The Earth's wide bridal bed!

Glory to God the Father,
Glory to God the Son,
And Thee, O Holy Ghost, by whom
All things are knit in one.

Hymn

FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

1.

Let the Proto-martyr rest,
Earliest honoured of the dead.
John! upon thy Saviour's breast
Drop once more that saintly head!

All the Church is met to-day
Unto God to sing, and pray;
Remembering those, the Babes, to whom was given
First for their Lord to die, and meet Him first in Heaven!

2.

Yield the children readiest place.
Tender parents near them stand!
From each mother's tearful face
All that little awe-struck band
Well may learn, and aptly teach
That God's electing love can reach
(Winding untracked its own mysterious way)
Souls which have only learned to suffer and obey.

3.

As from some Hesperian Isle
Ravished rose-leaves, loosely strewn,
Through a dark lake's dim defile
When the morning breeze hath blown—
Such were ye: so smooth the breath
That snatched you, blushing, on to death.
Mourn Rachel, mourn no longer! lest your sighs
O'ertake those vernal souls soft journeying to the skies!

4.

Blessed infants, timely caught
From a mortal mother's breast,
That wondering Angels might be taught
What of earth is best!

They with food of heavenly grain
Meet your lips; your forms sustain;
And teach you words of heavenly lore; and keep
A low and dulcet chaunt around you while you sleep.

5.

Hark, I hear them as they bend
O'er your cots, and gently sway them;
Angel songs with ours they blend:
Night or morn they never stay them.
"Glory be to God," they cry,
"To, and from Eternity:
"To God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
"All glory be from men, and from the Angel host."

Hymn

TO THE MEEK.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

1.

MEEK souls! whose humble faith can prize
Those heavenliest gifts of man,
Obedience, and Self-sacrifice—
Life's first, last, only plan
By which we mount "from grace to grace"
Toward our celestial resting-place!

2.

All hail! the haughty from their towers
Look down on you with scorn—
On you, scarce seen—like meadow flowers
Grass-hid, that perfume morn!
Unmarked the while, for them ye pray:
Earth's salt, that keeps her from decay.

3.

Taught by the Church, and by the Spirit,
Ye know that all things good
Are yours, unsought; that ye inherit
By virtue of your blood,
Old Adam's blood in Christ made pure,
Whate'er is worthy to endure.

4.

Therefore while hands unblest explore
The dark recesses of the earth
For iron mines, or golden ore,
Perchance as little worth,
Her fields are yours; the priceless treasures
Of alien, yet partaken pleasures.

5.

And while the haughty near you pile
Their Babel-towers of sun-burned clay
On yielding sand, volcanic isle,
A brief and perilous stay;
Ye dwell in tents, removed at will:
They fall; yet safe their inmates still!

6.

O what a load of selfish fear
By you will ne'er be known!
Yourselves ye love not, but revere
As beings not your own;
As temples which to God belong;
By Him secured from harm and wrong.

7.

And though ye deem not earth a stage
For strife, and pompous crime
Transmitted down from age to age,
And on from clime to clime,
Yet Honour shall attend your name;
And all that Faith reveres in Fame!

8.

"What man shall reign"—No matter who!
Alas we rave, and fret,
We press, we struggle, we pursue,
For what? for Power—and yet
On us submissive Angels wait,
Pleased with their mild Diaconate.

9.

O place us on the lowliest ground,
That we from thence may see,
Upreared above us, and around,
Rank, Order, and Degree:
Terrace o'er terrace ranged on high,
To lure and rest the heavenward eye!

10.

All Earth is yours; her mild increase;
Her lore through types laid bare;
Her generous toils; her grateful ease;
Her duties; and whate'er
To nature, with a "natural art"
Freedom and heavenly peace impart

11.

Nature to docile hearts, and minds
That sympathize with her,
In sunny calms, or dreariest winds
Alike doth minister:
Dark days her fasts the Fancy calls,
And bright her moving festivals.

12.

The soul, uncumbered with a load
Of self-dependent care,
Moves forth on equal plumes abroad,
A spirit of the air:
Its own identity forsakes;
Its own all shapes of beauty makes.

13.

It races with the Antelopes;
Among the rills it plays:
Diffused it lies round odorous slopes:
And in the sun's last rays
The loftiest boughs their cradles heave
To lull it in the crimson eve!

14.

How much that Genius boasts as hers,
And fancies hers alone,
On you, meek spirits, Faith confers!
The proud have further gone,
Perhaps, through life's deep maze—but you
Alone possess the labyrinth's clue.

15.

To you the costliest spoils of Thought
Wisdom unclaimed yields up:
To you her far-sought pearl is brought,
And melted in your cup.
To you her nard and myrrh she brings,
Like orient gifts to infant kings.

16.

The "single eye" alone can see
All Truths around us thrown,
In their eternal unity:
The humble ear alone
Has room to hold, and time to prize
The sweetness of life's harmonies.

17.

Notions, to Thought made visible,
Are but the smallest part
Of those immortal Truths, which dwell
Self-radiant in man's heart.
With outward beams are others bright—
But God has made you "full of light."

18.

One science well ye know; the Will
Of God, to man laid bare:
One art have mastered; to fulfil
The part assigned you there:
If other, meaner lore ye sought,
This first ye learned—to need it not!

19.

Empiric Laws, that hide the grace
Of human life, as hard
As iron mask upon a face
From answering eyes debarred,
Form but a lucid veil to you,
With all the Godhead shining through.

20.

Yes, Angels prompt us, Spirits fence!
But ye, a Father's hand
Who trace through all His Providence,
Discern that Angel-band.
'Tis yours alone to mark their blending
On tasks of love for aye descending.

21.

One half of all our cares and woes
Exist but in our thought:
And lightly fall the rest on those
With them who wrestle not.
The feather scarcely feels that gale
Which bursts the seaman's strongest sail.

22.

Yourselves not loving, room have ye
For love of all your kind:
And ye respect the mystery
Of Love Divine enshrined
In human ties, that, day by day,
Some portion lose of mortal clay.

23.

And dearer far become the names
Of Father, Child, and Wife
To those who feel their heavenly claims:
And holier earthly Life
To those who in that myriad mirror
See thus their Lord undimmed by error.

24.

In Kings you see Him on His throne:
In Priests before the shrine:
In suffering men you hear Him groan—
Thus life becomes divine;
Each shower with Fontal grace imbued,
And Eucharistic all your food!

25.

He who loves God all else above,
His own shall also clasp
In circles ampler far of love
Than weaker arms can grasp:
And, farther drawn through space and time,
His sympathies descend, and climb.

26.

Your virtues shall not die with you,
Or those you leave behind;
Destined each year to bloom anew,
And ampler space to find
For boughs o'er earth that spread and wave,
Though centered in your silent grave.

27.

That Race ordained so long to be
Sole witness here of God,
Formed but a single Family:
Yea, scattered now abroad,
Are still his seed whose marvelling eyes
First saw them star-like in the skies!

28.

What, though the long-lived Patriarchs saw
Their offspring as the sands!
To those who see them not, that Law
Unchanged, and changeless stands:
That Law which honours in the dust
The souls that placed with God their trust.

29.

Even now in each fair infant's face
The eye of Faith can see
A mild and patriarchal grace,
A Regal dignity—
He sits by future throngs half hid;
His throne that living pyramid!

30.

Hail, noble spirits, hail, O hail!
While bleats the lamb or cooes the dove
Your gentle kind shall never fail;
Nor earth wax faint in love.
Hail, peaceful kings: to you are given
Flower-crowns on earth, star-crowns in Heaven!

Hymn

FOR THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION.

1.

Subsiding from those heavenly plumes the air
Lies motionless: yet on that forehead fair
There hangs a pearly gloom, as if the shade
Of those departing pinions
On her brow were stayed.
Still sits she on that virgin bed
From which so late she reared her head;
Forward she bends in prayer.
Her hands upon her heart are crossed;
Her heart in dreams of glory lost.
Her silver lids are closing—mark
A tear is trembling on their lashes dark.
It falls: to earth that tear is given:
That sigh an echo finds in Heaven!

2.

O joyful Virgin, henceforth blessed ever
Among all nations! cause for joy thou hast.
Not vain henceforth shall prove man's great endeavour;

Henceforth no more his Future
Shall be like the Past.
Henceforward wise, good men
Shall toil no more in vain
The seeds of Hope, and Love, and Peace to sow
Among their kind below.
Faith, mover of the mountains,
From Earth's o'er-burdened heart
The Sinai mount at last shall raise:
The Law hath done its part!
Henceforth men shall not gaze
On the stars with blank amaze,
And vainly pine for wings to bear them
From the tumult of Life's mart.
No more self-caused afflictions!
No more self-willed transgressions!
But Gladness, Benedictions,
And humbly-toned Confessions;
And anthem, and loud hymn
Sent up from earth responsive to the harping Cherubim!

3.

Are such the thoughts whose radiant trains are passing,
Thrice-hallowed Virgin, through that pure, calm breast,
Which swells to meet them, as the ocean glassing
In its tide-wave those splendours
That heaved it from its rest?
Knowledge with men is stored
By many a slow degree,
But all thy shining lore is poured
In a gentle stream on thee!

'Tis Hope thy brow doth gird
With that second, heavenlier bow:
'Tis Love, that, breathing hymns unheard,
Warms sweetly with faint crimson
Thy lips, through which they flow!
Thou tastest first the joy of all thy kind:
Grace first in thee fulfils her earthly mission;
Thy tearful eyes, to outward objects blind,
Of God and Heaven have deep and full fruition!
O second Eve!—But she
Said not, "Even as Thy word, so be it unto me!"

4.

Mournful, till now, to the o'er-experienced ear,
Mournful were all the harmonies of earth,
As Autumn's dirge over the dying year:
Yea, more than sadness blended
With melodies of mirth.
The ocean, murmuring on the shore,
Breathed inland far a sad "no more:"
The winds but left their midnight cells
To fill the day with lorn "farewells."
'Tis o'er! The reign of force is o'er:
The arm of flesh is Lord no longer:
More dear henceforth is peace than war:
The weak henceforward is the stronger.
Earth's fountains, touched by breath Divine,
Gush up, henceforth, in bridal wine!
Now children (creatures lowly)
Point upward to the sky:
Honour henceforth is holy,
And Virgin Purity!

In star-pierced thickets the night bird
Translates henceforth each rapturous word
That she all day in Heaven hath heard—
Peace, peace! misdoubting Earth, be dumb!
Her Christ His power shall take: His kingdom it shall come.

5.

Lo! round her feet celestial flowers are lying!
The breath pathetic of those mild perfumes,
Comes it from them, or from her blessed sighing?
Lo! silver gleams alternate
With short billowy glooms!
The air, at every pore alive,
Sings like the golden murmur of the hive.
All round a paradisal light is glowing.
Down, down the Virgin sinks by slow degrees:
Her tender hands unfold; her tresses flowing
O'er that declining brow upon her knees.
Slumbering she lies once more upon her bed—
Two beams of light, down-shining from above,
Fall, on her bosom one, one on her head;
Betwen those two great beams on plumes outspread,
Hovers and gleams the everlasting Dove!

Hymn

FOR THE BUILDING OF A COTTAGE.

1.

Lay foundations deep and strong
On the rock, and not the sand—
Morn her sacred beam has flung
O'er our ancient land.

And the children through the heather
  Beaming joy from frank bright eyes
Dance along; and sing together
  Their loud ecstasies.
Children, hallowed song to-day!
Sing, aloud; but, singing, pray.
Orphic measures, proudly swelling,
  Lifted cities in old time:
Build we now an humbler dwelling
  With an humbler rhyme!
Unless God the work sustain,
Our toils are vain; and worse than vain.
Better to roam for aye, than rest
Under the impious shadow of a roof unblest!

2.

Mix the mortar o'er and o'er,
  Holy music singing:
Holy water o'er it pour,
  Flowers and tresses flinging!
Bless we now the earthen floor:
  May good Angels love it!
Bless we now the new-raised door:
  And that cell above it!
Holy cell, and holy shrine
For the Maid and Child divine!
Remember thou that see'st her bending
  O'er that babe upon her knee,
All Heaven is ever thus extending
  Its arms of love round thee!
Such thought thy step make light and gay
As yon elastic linden spray
On the smooth air nimbly dancing—
Thy spirits like the dew glittering thereon and glancing!

3.

Castles stern, in pride o'er-gazing
Subject leagues of wolds and woods;
Palace fronts their fretwork raising
'Mid luxurious solitudes!
These, through clouds their heads uplifting,
The lightning wrath of heaven invoke:
His balance power is ever shifting—
The reed outlasts the oak.
Live, thou cottage! live and flourish,
Like a bank which mild dews nourish,
Bright with field-flowers self-renewing,
Annual violets, dateless clover—
Eyes of flesh thy beauty viewing
With a glance may pass it over;
But to eyes that wiser are
Thou glitterest like the morning star!
O'er every heart thy beauty breathes
Such sweets as morn shall waft from those new-planted wreaths!

4.

Our toils—not toils—are all but ended;
The day has wandered by:
Her silver gleams the moon hath blended
With the azure of the sky:
Yet still the sunset lights are ranging
On from mossy stem to stem;
Low winds, their odours vague exchanging,
Chaunt day's requiem.
Upon the diamonded panes
The crimson falls with fainter stains.

More high in heavenward aspiration
The gables shoot their mystic lines:
While now, supreme in grace as station
The tower-like chimney shines.
Beneath that tower an altar lies.
Bring wood: light up the sacrifice!
Now westward point the arched porch—
Crown with a Cross the whole—our cot becomes a Church!

5.

Strike once more a livelier measure
Circling those fair walls again:
Songs of triumph, songs of pleasure
Well become you, gladsome train!
Mark that shadowy roof: each angle
Angel heads and wings support:
Those the woodbine soon must tangle,
These the rose shall court;
And mingling closer hour by hour,
Enclose ere long a sabbath bower—
There shall the Father oft at even
Entone some ancient hymn or story,
Till earth once more grows bright as heaven
With days of long past glory;
When Truth and Honour ranged abroad
To cleanse the world from Force and Fraud:
When Zeal was humble; Hope was strong:
And Virtue moved alone the angelic scourge of Wrong!

6.

O happy days! exhaustless dower
Of gentle joys, and hours well spent,

Renewed while moons their radiance shower
Upon the Acacia's silver tent;
Or airs of balmiest mornings thrill,
And swell with renovated play
The breasts of children, childish still,
And innocent alway.
O'er them light flit our woes and jars,
As shades o'er lilies, clouds o'er stars—
Even now my fancy hears the cooing
Of doves from well-known perch or croft;
The bees even now the flowers are wooing
With sleepy murmur soft.
Glad home, from menial service pure!
Thee shall no foreign wants obscure:
Here all the ties are sacred ties:
And Love shines clear through all, and Truth asks no disguise.

7.

Kings of the earth! too frail, too small
This humble tenement for you?
Then lo! from Heaven my song shall call
A statelier retinue!
They come, the twilight ether cheering,
(Not vain the suppliant song, not vain)
Our earth on golden platform nearing:
On us their crowns they rain!
Like Gods they stand, the portal
Lighting with looks immortal!
Faith, on her chalice gazing deep:
And Justice with uplifted scale:

Meek Reverence; pure, undreaming Sleep:
Valour in diamond mail!
There Hope with vernal wreath: hardby
Indulgent Love; keen Purity;
And Truth, with radiant forehead bare:
And Mirth, whose ringing laughter triumphs o'er Despair.

8.

Breathe low—stand mute in reverent trance!
Those Potentates their mighty eyes
Have fixed: Right well that piercing glance
Roof, wall, and basement tries!
Foundations few that gaze can meet—
Therefore the Virtues stay with few:
But where they once have fixed their seat,
Her home Heaven fixes too!
They enter now, with awful grace,
Their acceptable dwelling place.
In tones majestical yet tender
They chaunt their consecration hymn,
From jewelled breasts a sacred splendour
Heaving through shadows dim.
The rite is done: the seed is sown:
Leave, each his offering, and be gone!
Stay, ye for whom were raised these walls,
Possession God hath ta'en: and now His guests He calls.

Hymn

FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

1.

O Lamb of God! on whom alone
Earth's penal weight of sin was thrown,
Have mercy, Saviour, on Thine own!
For thou art Man. The Virgin gave
To Thee her breast, the earth a grave.
If smiles, while infant yet, on Thee
Were found, thy Mother knows, not we.
A man o'er Lazarus lulled asleep,
With them that wept Thou too didst weep.
O'er Salem dropped Thy tears, before
As yet her heart had drunk Thy gore.
All griefs of mortals Thou hast known—
Have mercy, Saviour, on Thine own.

2.

O Lamb of God, on whom was laid
The debt all worlds had never paid,
Have mercy, Saviour; hear and aid.
For Thou art God. Upon the throne
With God Thou sat'st of old alone;
Dread throne surpassing depth and height,
Eternal throne, and infinite!
Yet pity reached Thee there for man,
Ere worlds were shaped, or pain began.

With Abel bleeding Thou didst lie,
With Isaac forth wast led to die;
With Stephen stoned, and since, and yet,
With all Thy Martyrs' blood art wet.

3.

O Lamb of God, on whom alone,
Earth's penal weight of sin was thrown,
Have mercy, Saviour, on Thine own.
The day, the hour comes back: we wait
Before the shrine's forbidding gate.
We stand in sable garments clad;
The infant at the breast is sad.
In funeral black the walls are hung
No music peals the roofs along:
No fire on household hearth is warm;
No torch doth burn—as if a storm
From God had quenched each lamp and light,
In utter night we wait the night.

4.

O Lamb of God, on whom was laid
The debt all worlds had never paid,
Have mercy, Saviour; hear and aid.
The books are spread: mine ears once more
Are pierced by sounds which they abhor;
I hear the imprecating cry
Of "Crucify Him, Crucify;"
I hear—new horror lifts my hair,
That impious priest his raiment tear.

I hear that bought and perjured twain,
(Yet Thou shalt raise Thyself again)
Now Peter's self my spirit hears,
His vow, his oath—his dropping tears.

5.

O Lamb of God, on whom alone
Earth's penal weight of sin was thrown,
Have mercy, Saviour, on Thine own.
By Thy birth of mortal womb;
By Herod's word, an impious doom,
That murdered all Thine infant peers,
Blooming mild in sinless years.
By that sweat which from Thee burst,
Crown of thorns, and rood accursed;
By Thy dreadful, unquenched thirst:
By the crowd's fierce mockery;
By Thy three hours' agony;
And by that last unanswered cry—

6.

O Lamb of God, on whom was laid
The debt all worlds had never paid,
Have mercy, Saviour, hear and aid.
Like shapes at God's last trump new-risen,
My sins time-buried rise—and listen!
By that long cry my heart is riven,
And demons sweep yon darkened heaven.
Three crosses bar the black on high—
That Thief beside Thee hung so nigh,

How rolls he now on Thee his eye ;
Nor sees beyond Thee hills or sky !
Thus Christ, we turn from all to Thee.
" Miserere Domine."

Hymn

FOR EASTER SATURDAY.

Washing the Altar.

1.

Pour forth the wine-floods rich and dark,
Over the altar stone :
The time is short, the yew-trees, hark,
How mournfully they moan—
It is the sacred blood of Christ,
By Angels poured o'er earth ;
While sable turns to amethyst,
And death to the new birth.

2.

O'er all the altar pour the wine,
With joyful strength amain ;
The streams alone from God's great vine
Can wash that altar's stain—
It is the Saviour's mystic blood :
The ensanguined planet now
Ascends from this baptismal flood,
As bright as Christ's own brow.

3.

The flood that cleanses on and in
Roll, sacred brethren, roll;
But Thou whose suffering purged our sin,
O wash each sinful soul—
It is the atoning blood of Him,
By whom all worlds are shriven:
Who lights with love our midnight dim,
And changes earth to Heaven.

SELF-SACRIFICE.

1.

When Christ let fall that sanguine shower
Amid the garden dew,
O say what amaranthine flower,
In that red rain up grew?
If yet below, the blossom grow,
Then earth is holy yet:
But if it bloom forgotten, woe
To those who dare forget!

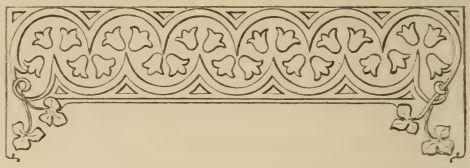
2.

No flower so precious, sweet, and lone,
Expands beneath the skies:
In Eden-bowers it lurked unblown—
Its name? Self-sacrifice!

The very name we scarce can frame,
And yet that secret root,
The monsters of the wild might tame,
And Heaven is in the fruit!

3.

Alas! what murmur spreads around?
"The news thereof hath been:
"But never yet the man was found,
"Whose eye that flower had seen."
Then nobles all! leave court and hall,
And search the wide world o'er;
For whoso finds this Sancgreall,
Stands crowned for evermore!



Queen Bertha[a] at her Vespers.

1.

Half kneeling yet, and half reclining,
She held her harp against her knees:
Aloft the ruddy roofs were shining;
And sunset touched the trees.
From the gold border gleamed like snow
Her foot: a crown enriched her brow:
Dark gems confined that crimson vest
Close moulded on her neck and breast.

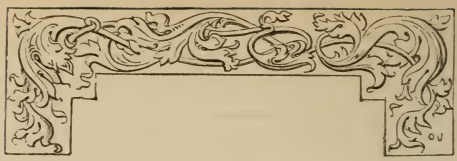
2.

In silence lay the cloistral court,
And shadows of the convent towers:
Well ordered now in stately sort
Those royal halls and bowers.
The organ's peal had just swept by—
Bright arms lay quivering yet on high:
Thereon the warriors gazed; and then
Glanced lightly at the Queen again.

[a] Queen Bertha was the wife of Ethelbert, first Christian King of Kent.

3.

While from her lip the wild hymn floated,
  Such grace in those uplifted eyes,
And sweet, half absent looks, they noted,
  That, surely, through the skies
They deemed her soul went floating ever
Upon that song's perpetual river,
And, smiling from its joyous track,
Upon her heavenly face looked back!



Queen Bertha's Vigil.

1.

Beside the casement of her bower
So tall the garden pageants grew,
With every breeze each glimmering flower
Its moonlit dews waved through:
White in the radiance glanced the fawn;
Flitted the hare from lawn to lawn;
By close, broad firs, that flecked the sheen,
And barred with black the silver green.

2.

Far off, like mighty cliffs, their shade
Over a waste of waves that cast,
The castle walls o'er wood and glade
Flung down their darkness vast.
Answering a monarch's joyous call
Far lands kept there high festival:
There flocked the noble and the fair—
The fairest, noblest was not there.

3.

And yet for her no flowers were blowing:
No listening dell or vale profound
Enjoyed her breath: for her was flowing
Nor glassy stream, nor stream of sound!

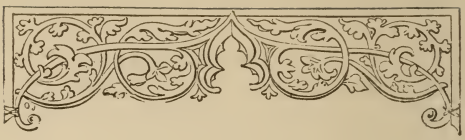
In vain the birds their raptures squandered :
The winds that through her chamber wandered,
And o'er her pillow brushed serene
But found the place where she had been !

4.

The Moon, whose glory swelled with light
  Each lilied slope or laurelled mound,
With touch more sharp and exquisite
  Defined one rock cross-crowned.
Like argent flames or spires of frost
Uprose that shape of stone, embossed
With breeze-worn sculptures quaint and mild
Of Maid and Angel, King and Child.

5.

There on her knees the Queen was praying :
  On that cold marble leaned her breast ;
Prayer after prayer devoutly saying
  With palms together pressed.
There for her Lord she prayed aloud :
Prayed for her people, blind and proud—
That Heaven would chase away their night :
That God would bathe his heart in light !



Queen Bertha's Alms.

1.

Glad as that thrill some princely birth
With hushed yet rapturous omen gracing,
The stir, as from her palace forth
The young fair Queen came pacing:
But here no pompous guard was set;
No flattering concourse gathered round:
The poor about her gate were met—
The readiest place the poorest found.

2.

Like youthful Angels all alert
The Queen dispensed her bounteous load:
On those whom keenest fates had hurt
Her earlier gifts bestowed.
Her face the maniac's rage beguiled—
She turned her oft among the ring,
And paused, above a poor blind child
The sweetest of her songs to sing!

3.

Kind gifts to some, kind words to more ;
  Kind looks to each and all she gave ;
Which on with them through life they bore,
  And down into their grave.
Around her feet the children crept,
  And kissed the grass those feet had trod :
Whilst eyes that oft for pain had wept
  With tears of gladness gemmed the sod.

4.

The chiming of the convent bells
  Called her at last away to prayer :
Farewell she smiled on their farewells—
  And turned, when, unaware,
An old grey man with hands outspread,
  She marked low-bent on quivering knee :
Over his brow she stooped and said,
  "A kiss is all I have for thee."

Queen Bertha's Matin Song.

The Morning-star was rising—
O'er ocean's tremulous crystal hung
His bright feet touched the billow,
His glance o'er earth he flung.
On the young Queen it played
Yet warm and disarrayed,
As, leaping lightly from her pillow,
The golden harp she swayed.
Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star, and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

1.

"Thou, that on my dreams
"All night long wert beaming,
" O'er shining leaves and silver streams
"Brighter now art gleaming!
"Every fountain hath
"Light thy keen smiles give her:
" In every bay-leaf's dewy bath
"Thy soft swift glances quiver!"

Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star, and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

2.

" Heaven doth laugh above:
" Earth below is gay:
" And souls that walk 'twixt light and love
" Shall walk in joy alway!
" White as yon lily sweet
" That springs, while cold airs fan it,
" A virgin-spouse her mate to greet
" In thee, glad matin Planet!"
Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star, and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

3.

" All the starry hosts
" And all the angelic band
" At once o'er all the ethereal coasts
" Leaped forth at God's command.
" But surely from afar
" 'Twas thee men saw on high,
" When Darkness fled before the star
" Of Christ's Nativity."
Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star, and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

4.

" When the Earth was made
" Stars and Angels sang :
" When Christ was in the manger laid
" More loud the anthem rang.
" But louder yet those choirs
" The last great morn shall blend
" Their heavenly songs and heavenly fires;
" While thou dost last ascend!"
Hide not the clouds among,
Brightest star, and fairest!
Until her song those heavens along
Between thy wings thou bearest.

A TALE

OF THE MODERN TIME.

PART I.

1.

An old man once I knew whose aged hair
A summer brilliance evermore retained:
Youthful his voice and full, not rough or spare;
His cheek all smooth, and like a child's engrained,
Or marble altar innocently stained
With roses mirrored in its tablet white—
Like May his eye: his foot-fall slow but light.

2.

Yet no one marvelled at him: of his ways
Rarely men spake, as of the buried dead;
And dropped him from their lips with trivial phrase.
"Gentle he was, and kind," the neighbours said,
"Albeit an idle life and vain he led."
Odours he loved from flowers at twilight dim;
And breath and song of morn: children loved him.

3.

I have beheld him on a wintry plant
An eye delighted bending full an hour!
As though the Spring o'er every tendril scant
Crept on beneath his ken, from flower to flower:
Low shed and brake to him were hall and bower!
O'er a leaf's margin he would pore and gaze
As on some problem of the starry maze!

4.

Over a rose his palm he loved to curve
As though it brought him warmth from out the ground.
Instinctively his soundless step would swerve
To where lone runnels dropped through cave profound:
His body there he bent above the sound,
And seemed to fold it up in his embrace,
With heaving breast, and gently smiling face!

5.

I wondered at him long: but youth and awe
Restrained me from demanding of his story.
At last, it chanced one day, this man I saw
Reclining 'neath an oak rifted and hoary,
Last tree of a wild, woodland promontory.
Far round below the forest deep and warm
Was waving in the light of an illumined storm.

6.

I placed me at his feet: his eyes were closed—
Celestial brightness hung upon his mien,
And all his features, tranquilly composed:

I gazed on him, and cried, " Where hast thou been
" In youth? What done, what read, what heard, what seen?"
At my own voice I trembled; but the man
Looked on me with a smile and calmly thus began.

7.

The Tale, true told, of every Human Being
Were awful—yet upon each new-born child,
O star divine! the eye of the All-seeing
Rested in glory! Heaven looked down and smiled:
And choirs of joyful Angels undefiled
Around the cradle sang, and evermore
In youth walked near him, after, and before.

8.

Yea, and their shadowy wings in mercy hide
The marvels round us, and the peril. Say,
'Mid the lone forest, on the mountain side,
What miles of mazes hast thou tracked to-day?
Had some black chasm girt visibly thy way,
Couldst thou secure have wandered thus? Not so—
The danger is not ours while danger none we know.

9.

My life hath been a marvel. Thine no less.
If thou that marvel hast not yet discerned,
Lament not therefore. Unto wretchedness
That knowledge grew for which our parents yearned.
The best and happiest ofttime least have learned
Of Man's dread elements—what dust—what spirit—
That which we are, what have, what make, and what inherit.

10.

Action in trance, in panic Thought were lost,
If all we are we knew ourselves to be.
O'er a great deep, now calm, now tempest-tossed,
Rises one rock; but far below the sea
That rock slants down—a mountain! Such are we,
Self-known, compared with that which we remain,
Buried in night beneath our spirit's conscious plane.

11.

In Man the Finite from the Depth ascends—
Centre is Man of all men hear or see;
Chapel where Time with Incorruption blends,
Where Dust is wedded to Divinity.
All but omnipotent in mind is he.
His very dreams creative! Like a God
He walks at noon; at night lies cold beneath the sod.

12.

Thou seekest Knowledge: every lore we prize
But as a lamp thereby ourself to know.
Stranger! 'tis well to turn within our eyes
If we look heavenward, having turned them so.
Horror unnamed, and phantom forms of woe
Rebuke the haughtier quest. With single aim
If thou my tale require, receive in joy the same.

PART II.

1.

Happy my childhood was; devout and gay:
My youth was full of glory, joy, and might,
Like the swift morning of a stormy day
In summer, when from out the gulfs of night
Day leaps at once to the empyreal height.
Strength without bound in spirit, body, and soul,
I felt: and in my gladness mocked control.

2.

In the rapture of that strength I went abroad
Where'er Ambition called, or Passion led:
Full many a deep my ploughing bark hath scored:
Full many a plain hath echoed to my tread:
All enterprize I sought: all books I read:
All thoughts I pondered, murmuring in my mirth
That text, "Be thou, O Man, the Lord of Earth."

3.

Deeply I studied, in all tomes and tongues,
The Historic legend, Philosophic page:
More deeply yet those earlier mythic songs
Built up by Bards for legislative Sage,
Himself a builder up, from age to age,
Of States—true poems each—yea songs divine,
Where souls in concord rest, balanced as line with line.

4.

All Art and Science at the Gentile feast
Of Western pride advanced, I knew right well:
And laughed to mark the great Book of the East
Push on through all, as through a garden dell
Bright with frail flowers, and paved with glittering shell,
Some Asian Elephant. Thereon I gazed
Indifferent half, indignant half, and praised.

5.

Not one of all my instincts I denied:
Whate'er I saw I sought, and seeking gained;
And rolled against the palate of my pride:
That which the eye desired the hand attained:
Each bar I dashed aside, each pleasure drained;
And then flung proudly from me. I had sworn
All triumphs to achieve, and then to scorn.

6.

Was I then wicked? Friend! applauding nations,
Such question asked, had called me great and good.
I loved my kind—but more their acclamations:
My thoughts were birds of prey, and snatched that food
From weak and strong to gorge their infant brood,
And make them fierce for battle—but the hour
Was come that tried at last my fancied power.

7.

One day a mountain summit I was pacing:
Through cloudy chasms the sunbeams fell thereon;
Over its plain the mighty winds were racing,

Quiring Eolian anthems in loud tone.
Long time I walked in pride, and walked alone:
And what I was revolved—and turned again,
To mark the far off towns and visible main.

8.

Man I considered then: and I looked forth
Upon the works and wonders of his hand,
The deep his beaten road, his palace earth;
Commanding all things; yet beneath command
Of Mind, and him who wields its magic wand.
Then said I, "Haply in my spirit lies
Some germ of Power's great tree that filleth earth and skies!"

9.

All treasures of my Knowledge, straight I spread
Unrolled as in a map before my eyes;
And walked among them with a conqueror's tread,
That moves o'er fields of hard-won victories,
Dreaming of mightier yet. A long disguise
Fell from me in a moment; and I trod
A worshipper no longer but a God!

10.

Towards me a throne descended through the air—
When lo! the crown of my demoniac Pride
Updrawn, raised up my horror-stricken hair!
For, wheresoe'er I wandered, by my side
Another step appeared to tread and glide:
No mortal form was near! and in the abyss
Of heaven, the mountain floors are echoless

11.

I stopped; it stopped; I walked; it walked; I turned:
My fears I mocked, unworthy of a man.
Then a cold poison from that heart self-spurned
Welled forth, a bitter flood: and I began
Once more my life and inmost heart to scan:
Till suddenly what shape in soul I was
Before me I beheld plainly as in a glass.

12.

Then my disease I knew; but not the cure.
Lightning, sent flaming from the breast of heaven,
Revealed my sins long-hid, from lure to lure.
Beams from the eyes of God, like shafts were driven
Against me: to her depth my soul was riven,
Whereof each portion, conscious and amazed,
In stupor of despair upon the other gazed.

13.

Thus on my throne, that marble mountain height,
My Soul I saw! I went I know not whither.
Down like a tempest fell from heaven the night:
I heard the sea, and rushed in panic thither;
By ghost-like clouds, and woods my step made wither,
And rock, and chasm that seemed to gape and sever,
I rushed, and thought I rushed for ever and for ever.

PART III.

1.

I woke in a great cavern of the main.
The wave rolled in, upon its wild breast bearing
A storm of icy wind and cloudy rain,
Along the blinded roof with sound despairing:
The billows, that rough beach harrowing and tearing,
Thundered far off: while morning, just begun,
Peered dimly through the spray, and through the shadows dun.

2.

That shore was piled with death, like Nature's bier.
There, whitening spread a sea-beast's mouldering bones:
The rifted wings of a dead eagle here.
Over the wet cliff went funereal moans.
Yet calm at first I paced those wave-washed stones,
Whose crash the deadlier sound awhile could quell
Of that low step beside, my spirit's knell.

3.

Still, still, where'er I turned that step would follow.
My fate above me hung by one frail thread:
Beneath me yawned the earth, a vast veiled hollow!
To battle-fields, athirst for death I fled.
Yet there, while rushing hosts beside me sped,
That footstep still I heard and knew from all;
Now harsh, now dull as moth fretting a coffin's pall.

4.

Thick, thick like leaves from autumn's skeleton woods,
The shafts went by me, and as idly went.
Then back I turned into my solitudes ;
As slow, in sullen cloud of rage o'er-spent
As mountain beast into dim forest tent,
With hunger unabated, when the night
Melts ; and the eastern wolds spread wide in mournful light.

5.

Stranger ! I tell you part : I speak not all.
Henceforth I walked alone ; and joined my kind
Only when lured by some black funeral :
On capital cities oft, with watchings blind,
I gazed, what time rushed forth the freezing wind ;
Between their turrets and the wintry stars,
All day I lay in tombs, or caves dim-lit with spars.

6.

On peaks eclipsing to its rim the ocean
Hath been my dwelling : rivers I have seen
Whose sound alone dispersed a gradual motion
O'er cloud-like woods, their deep primeval screen !
Lone sands my feet have trod beneath the sheen
Of spheres unnamed. From zone to zone I fled,
As though each land in turn grew fire below my tread.

7.

But Heaven had ended now my time of sorrow
When most I seemed in penal horror bound :
Dreamless one night I slept, and on the morrow

Strange tears now first amid the dew I found
Wherewith my heavy hair and cheeks were drowned.
And in my heart, fanned by that morning air,
There lay, as I walked on, my childhood's long-lost prayer.

8.

I lay me down upon a sunny bank,
Ridged o'er a plain yet white with virgin snows,
Though now each balmy noon, and midnight dank
Lightened the burden of the vernal rose;
My eyes (their wont it was till daylight's close)
Fixed on my own still shadow—in that light
Intense—keenly defined, and dark as night.

9.

I pored upon it: sudden, by that shade
Another shadow rested; faint and dim:
At first I thought my tears the phantom made,
Then cried, "I do but dream it, form and limb."
In horror then abroad I seemed to swim:
Then my great agony grew calm and dumb,
For now I knew indeed my destined hour was come.

10.

My spirit's foe was now the spoil to claim—
My heart's chill seemed his hand upon my heart:
O marvel! clearer while that shade became,
No mocking fiend, I saw, no lifted dart;
But a dejected Mourner; down apart
His head declined: one hand in grief he pressed
Upon the heaving shadow of a sorrowing breast.

11.

The other round my neck was thrown, so fair,
So kind, so gentle, none thereon might gaze,
Nor feel that love alone had placed it there!
There dropped the cloud of my dejected days.
He who for years had tracked my wandering ways
Had followed me in love! O Virgin-born,
Thy shadow was the light of my eternal morn!

12.

Stranger! there came a joy to me that hour;
Such joy, that never can it leave my soul!
All Heaven, condensed to one ambrosial flower,
Had fallen into my breast! I sucked the whole
Of blessedness at once: had reached the goal—
Yet still the immortal feast before me lay;
Forward through climes of light a never-ending way!

13.

From that time saw I what 'tis Heaven to see,
That God is God indeed, and good to Man.
Who once hath proved Love's great reality,
Henceforth forgets himself to probe and scan.
Knowledge for him remits her ancient ban:
Back fly those demons, outwardly to sin
That lure the soul or turn our inquest sad within!

14.

Then looked I up; and drank from Heaven that light
Which makes the world within, and world around
Alone intelligible, pure, and bright:

My forehead then, but not by me, was crowned:
Then my lost youth, no longer sought, was found:
My penance then complete; or turned to pain
So sweet, the enamoured heart embraced it like a gain.

15.

My kind, new-vested in the eternal glory
Of God made Man, glorious to me became.
Henceforth those crowns that shine in mortal story
I deemed it grief to bear, madness to claim.
To be a man seemed now man's loftiest aim.
His noblest joy, to wait on one the least
Of those who fight God's fight or join His kingly feast.

16.

Stranger! this tale of one man's life is over.
No lore in youth acquired have I unlearned;
And nothing more was given me to discover.
One difference only have I since discerned:
Truths, which as abstract or remote, I spurned
In youth, as real most my heart now prizes;
And, what of old looked real, now as dream despises;

17.

Or but like dreams reveres. Hollow and vain
To me the pageants of this world appear;
Or truth but symbolled to the truthful brain.
The future world I find already here;
The unbeholden palpable and dear:
Firm as a staff to lean on; or a rod
Of power miraculous, and sent by God.

18.

A rod so mighty, earth's suspended ball
Thereby but smitten, straightway turning hoar,
In a pale ashy shower away would fall:
And yet of virtue from her heart's deep core
To suck the sweetness of its untold store.
Thus palpable to faith the worlds unseen:
And their immaculate joys, perpetual and serene.

19.

Stranger, farewell! Far off a bell is tolling:
A bridal or a funeral bell—whate'er
It chaunts, in harmony the tones are rolling.
All bells alike summon mankind to prayer!
Yea, and for me those twain one day shall pair
Their blended chimes to one. When I am dead
Stain not with tears my grave—it is a bridal bed.

20.

He ceased. The inmost sense of that I heard
I know not: yet, because the man was wise,
His legend I have written word for word.
All things hold meaning—to unclouded eyes
Feathers, and humblest flowers have auguries.
It may be then this weed some balm doth bear;
Some cure for sight long dim—some charm against despair.

The Nun.

Close by my cheek there lies a lily,
  Each morning while my lids unclose,
As lustrous as the morning planet,
  And scented like the rose.

Above my bed a wild dove carols,
  Rolling low laughter from her wings,
'Mid waves of light! that vowelled music
  I hear, and think an Angel sings.

Each night before I yield to slumber,
  My hands are folded on my breast:
Who spreads them forth to welcome sunrise?
  My Angel guide who loves me best.

And while the convent choirs are singing,
  While clouds of white the censor breathes,
Ascending cherubs and descending,
  Glance forth among those silver wreaths.

'Mid all those silver stems and branches
They float in their enraptured strife,
Like Eden-birds that pierce and circle
The branches of the Tree of Life!

Are these but fancies? Boastful dreamers
Of all the empty dreams of earth,
Are visions then of wealth or vengeance,
Alone the true, alone of worth?

Are these but fancies? yet that tremor,
Which through the chastened soul doth run
When some repining wish is conquered,
And leaves me wholly—this is none!

The lowliest pleasures are the sweetest—
Angels themselves with crowns of rays,
Are not more glorious, not more blessed,
Than daily duties, prayer, and praise!

O glorious visions! glorious duties!
O beam eternal—blissful gloom;
Of silent night, and dreamless slumber!
O blessed life! O blessed tomb!

Epitaph.

He roamed half round this world of woe
Where toil and labour never cease:
Then dropped one little span below
In search of Peace.

And now to him mild beams and showers,
All that he needs to grace his tomb,
From loneliest regions, at all hours,
Unsought-for come.

The Ascetic.

1.

A SAD Thought came there to my breast,
And said, "I walk the world unblest:
"I pray thee, let me be thy guest.

"Each heart is full of its own care.
"To me no space it deigns to spare.
"A generous grief not one will bear.

"The orb of earth like night I roam;
"But never found I yet a home:
"Therefore at last to thee I come."

2.

I let him in—for youth is kind;
Nor dare I call its prompture blind;
Though bitter fruits remain behind.

He stayed a day with me; and then
I could not let him go again:
I said, "Abide a week or twain."

All day he sang; all night he kept
Long vigils near me as I slept.
Thus on into my heart he crept.

3.

He said, " If thou my lore wilt know,
" And bear my heavenly pain below,
" Then shalt thou taste no baser woe.

" And, careless of thy proper weal,
" Thou for thy suffering race shalt feel
" Deep pity and eternal zeal.

" And, dwelling in thy place alone,
" Thou shalt look down, thyself unknown,
" Upon all Knowledge round thee strewn."

4.

O Lady! turn those eyes away:
For when their beams upon me play
The whole wide world grows blank and grey!

Disturb not thou a lonely fate.
A milder beauty is my mate:
And I to her am dedicate.

Pass onward, beautiful as morn!
Pass on, and shine on hearts forlorn.
Pass on from me—but not in scorn.

5.

In thee collecting all her gleams,
As from a centre Beauty beams—
I catch that light on leaves and streams.

In waving boughs, and winding shells,
In buds, in clouds, thy beauty dwells:
From all the birds thy music wells.

In thought familiar thus with thee,
Thine outward form I will not see;
It jars upon my reverie.

6.

Nay, oft from lifeless shapes around
My dazzled eyeballs seek the ground :
And my heart beats with awe profound.

I sit upon the dull grey shore,
And hear the infinite waters roar—
One mournful sound for evermore.

I lean upon a rock my breast.
I love its coldness, heart-oppressed.
I love its hardness, and its rest.

The Infant Bridal.

(A TALE OF THE OLDEN TIME.)

PART I.

1.

Of old between two nations was great war.
Its cause no mortal knew; or when begun;
Therefore they combated so much the more,
The sire his sword bequeathing to his son:
Till gentleness and joy had wholly fled,
And well nigh every hand with blood was red.

2.

In vain the mother wept. Her sighs were blown
Away by the loud gust of popular rage.
In vain the young fair widow made her moan:
In vain the tender virgin would engage
Her love to gentler thoughts. He rushed to arms,
Proud of her beauty pale, and loud alarms.

3.

Glory, for Honour a blind substitute
In hearts aspiring and a servile will,
On to the battle chased them. Man and brute,
Horseman and horse, by the same trumpet-thrill
Were borne into the frenzy of red fields,
Ghastly ere night with dead, upstaring from their shields.

4.

Glory at first, and after glory, Shame;
Shame to propose the compact, first to bend;
And Fear, which masks full oft in Valour's name,
And doth false honour like a shade attend;
Fear to be thought to fear—these plagues did urge
The maniacs forward with a threefold scourge.

5.

Both kingdoms raging thus in fever fit
More direful every hour became their spleen·
The sleeping boy full oft his brow would knit
Against a foeman he had never seen:
Full oft the man of venerable hairs
Bowed to the dust his head depressed by grief and cares.

6.

Valley and town lay drowned in tears and sorrow.
Each noontide trembled with perturbed annoy:
And no one dared expect a kinder morrow.
To be a mother was no more a joy.
Hope no more hovered o'er the cradle. Love
Wept; and no friend had heart such anguish to reprove.

7.

How often to a little sleeping child,
Smiling, and sleeping on the mother's knee,
That mother thus complained. "Ah, little child!
"God only knows if it be good for thee
"My comforter, my solace, to have come
"Down to this world so harsh and wearisome!

8.

"Happy awhile with me thy spirit dwells;
"Awhile contented 'mid the petty range
"Of daily things, to thee all miracles.
"For arms thou dost not sigh, nor pant for change.
"Thy dreams are bloodless: thou dost smile when sleeping,
"In Eden founts thy new-born fancies steeping.

9.

"Ah, must that brow, so clear, so smooth, so white,
"By a hard ruthless helm be one day prest?
"Ah, must the red lance in its murderous might
"One day pierce through, and gore that tender breast?
"Ah, little infant! must thou lie one day
"Far, far from me, cold clay upon cold clay?

10.

"Wherefore so fast do these thy ringlets grow?
"Stay little child, be alway what thou art,
"That I may ever, while the rough winds blow,
"Clasp thee as now, and hide thee in my heart.
"Where found you those new words? I fear each day
"To hear thee cry, 'Mother, I must away.'

11.

" Is this to be a mother? I am none—
" And yet I fear to lose a gift not prized.
" Is this, ah God, to have a little son?
" Are these my prayers? my dreams thus realized?
" Defrauded of my own while lingering here,
" How can I hope, O child, to deck far off thy bier?"

PART II.

1.

The hosts, in silence marching on all night,
At sunrise met upon the battle plain.
The monarchs there engaged in single fight:
There by a rival's hand was either slain.
Long time men stood in gloom, stern, and sad-hearted;
Then, bound by solemn vows, homeward in peace departed.

2.

A counsel went there forth. Each King had left
Behind a blooming infant; one a boy,
A girl the other; both alike bereft;
Both innocent; both meet for love and joy;
Both heirs of sorrow. Holy Church these twain
Shall join in one, men cried; and peace be ours again.

3.

Who first devised the expedient no one knows.
Perhaps old sages, after long debate,
And loud lament of immemorial woes,
Bending their deep brows in a hall of state,
Conceived the project: and from Fancy sought
A cure for ills by rage fantastic wrought.

4.

Some chief perhaps, of all his sons bereft,
And now half blind in his forlorn old age,
Cried loud in anguish while his tower he left
To hide him in a moss-grown hermitage,
" Hear ye my words, and on your hearts engrain them,
"Love gave me many children: Hate hath slain them."

5.

Haply some maiden, for the war deserted,
Exclaimed, " I would that little warlike pair
" Had loved as long as war the loved hath parted."
Perhaps kind angels called her wish a prayer.
Enough: I tell an ancient legend, told
By better men than I, long dead and cold.

6.

While the young bride in triumph home was led,
They strewed beneath her litter branches green;
And kissed light flowers, then rained them on a head
Unconscious as the flowers what all might mean.
Men, as she past them, knelt; and women raised
Their children in their arms, who laughed and gazed.

7.

That pomp approaching woodland villages,
Or shadowing convents piled near rivers dim,
The church-bells from grey towers girt round with trees
Reiterated their loud wordless hymn;
And golden cross, and snowy choir serene
Moved on, old trunks, and older towers between.

8.

An hour ere sunset from afar they spied
The city walls: dark myriads round them clinging:
Now o'er a carpeted expanse they glide;
Now the old bridge beneath their tread is ringing:
They reach the gate—they pass the towers below—
And now once more emerge, a glittering show!

9.

O what a rapturous shout receives them, blending
Uncounted bells with chime of human voices!
That fortress old, as on they wind ascending,
Like the mother of some victor chief rejoices.
From every window tapestries wave: among
The steep and glittering roofs group above group they throng!

10.

The shrine is gained. Two mighty gates expanding
Let forth a breeze of music onward gushing,
In pathos lulled, yet awful and commanding;
Down sink the crowds, at once their murmur hushing.
Filled with one soul, the smooth procession slowly
Advances with joined palms, cross-led, and lowly.

11.

Lo! where they stand in yon high, fan-roofed chamber—
Martyrs and Saints in dyed and mystic glass
With sumptuous haloes, vermiel, green and amber
Flood the far aisles, and all that by them pass:
Rich like their painter's visions—in those gleams
Blazoning the burden of his Patmian dreams!

12.

A forest of tall lights in mystic cluster
Like fire-topped reeds, from their aerial station
Pour on the group a mild and silver lustre:
Beneath the blessing of that constellation
The rite proceeds—pure source whence rich increase
Of love henceforth, and piety, and peace.

13.

Small was the ring, and small in truth the finger!
What then? the faith was large that dropped it down;
A faith to Heaven that soared (for Hope had winged her)
And won from Heaven a perdurable crown.
A germ of Love, at plighting of that troth
Into each bosom sank; and grew there with its growth.

14.

The ladies held aloft the bridal pair:
They on each other smiled, and gazed around
With unabashed delight, and generous air,
Their infant brows with golden circlet bound.
The prelates blessed them, and the nobles swore
True faith and fealty by the sword they bore.

15.

Home to the palace, still in order keeping,
That train returned; and in the stateliest room
Laid down their lovely burden, all but sleeping,
Together in one cradle's curtained gloom:
And lulled them with low melody, and song,
And jest past lightly 'mid the courtly throng.

16.

Great is the sanctity of marriage rites—
Therefore of these will I no more declare.
Comus, away! and ye, too curious Sprites,
Touch not that couch, that curtain's fringe forbear!
Sleep, little lovers, sleep at will, or wake—
Good night! our worthless song must not your slumbers break.

PART III.

1.

Ah, lovely sight! behold them—creatures twain
Hand in hand wandering through some verdant alley.
Or sunny lawn of their serene domain,
Their wind-caught laughter echoing musically;
Or skimming in pursuit of bird-cast shadows
With feet immaculate the enamelled meadows.

2.

Tiptoe now stand they by some towering lily;
And fain would peer into its snowy cave:
Now the boy bending o'er some current chilly,
The feebler backward draws him from the wave;

But he persists, and gains for her at last
Some bright flower from the dull weeds hurrying past.

3.

Oft if some aged priest the cloister crossed,
Both hands they caught; and bade him explicate
(That nought of good through idlesse might be lost)
At large all duties of the nuptial state.
And oft each other kissed with infant glee,
As though this were some great solemnity.

4.

In some old missal sometimes would they look,
Touching with awe the illuminated page;
And scarce for tears the spectacle might brook
Of babes destroyed by Herod's murderous rage.
Here sank a Martyr in ensanguined vest:
With more familiar smile there beamed the Virgin blest.

5.

Growing, their confidence as quickly grew:
Light pet, and childish quarrel seldom came.
To make them lighter yet, and yet more few,
Their nurse addressed them thus—an ancient dame—
"Children, what perfect love should dwell, I ween,
"'Twixt husband and young wife, 'twixt King and Queen.

6.

"The turtle, widowed of her mate, no more
"Lifts her lone head; but pines, and pining dies.
"In many a tomb 'mid yon Cathedral hoar,
"Monarch or Knight beside his lady lies:
"Such tenderness and truth they shewed, that fate
"No power was given their dust to separate.

7.

" Rachael, not less, and Ruth whereof men read
" In book ordained our life below to guide,
" Loved her own husband each, in word and deed
" Loved him full well, nor any loved beside.
" And Orpheus too, and Pyramus, men say,
" Though Paynim born, lived true, and so shall live for aye.

8.

" What makes us, children, to good Angels dear?
" Unblemished Truth, and hearts in sweet accord.
" These also draw the people to revere
" With stronger faith their King and Sovereign Lord.
" Then perfect make your love, and amity
" Alway: but most of all if men are by."

9.

Such lore receiving ofttimes hand in hand
Those babes walked gravely: at the garden gates
Meantime the multitude would flock and stand,
And hooded nuns looked downwards from their grates.
These when the Princes marked, they moved awhile
With loftier step, and more majestic smile:

10.

Or sat enthroned upon some broidered bank
(The lowlier flowers in wrecks around them thrown)
Shadowed with roses rising rank on rank:
And there, now wreathed, now leaning into one,
They talked, and kissed, again and yet again,
To please good Angels thus; and win good men.

11.

Swift rolled the years. The boy now twelve years old,
Vowed to the Cross and honourable war,
For Palestine deserts our northland cold.
Her husband—playmate—is he hers no more
Up to his hand, now timid first she crept—
"Farewell," he said: she sighed. He kissed her and she wept.

12.

A milk-white steed; a crest whose snowy pride
Like wings, or maiden tresses drooped apart:
A Cross between: and (every day new dyed)
Fair emblem on his shield, a bleeding heart,
Marked him far off from all. Not mine to tell
What fields his valour won: what knights before him fell.

13.

No barbarous rage that host impelled: but zeal
For Christian faith, and sacred rights profaned!
And Triumph smiled upon the avenging steel
That smote the haughty, and set free the chained.
Foremost he fought. In Victory's final hour
Star-bright he shone from Salem's topmost tower!

14.

Swift as that Fame, which like an Angel ran
Before him on a glory-smitten road,
Homeward the princely boy returned, a man.
A lovelier Angel graced their old abode—
But where his youthful playmate? where? half-dazed
Each on the other's beauty wondering gazed.

15.

Strange joy they found all day in wandering over
The spots in which their childish sports had been;
Husband and wife whilome, now loved and lover,
A broken light brightened yet more the scene!
Night came: a gay yet startled bride he led,
Old rites scarce trusting, to the bridal bed.

16.

No more remains of all this grand old story.
They loved with love eternal: spent their days
In peace, in good to man, in genuine glory.
No spoils unjust they sought or unjust praise.
Their children loved them and their people blessed—
God grant us all such lives—in Heaven for aye such rest!

17.

But ye profane and unbelieving crowd!
Who dare to mock our childish bridal, cease!
Make answer first, and answer make aloud,
Unblest was that which gave two kingdoms peace?
Much less, much less the high-souled Muse approves
Grey hairs in rage and hate, than infant loves!

King Henry II.
at the Tomb of King Arthur.

PART I.

1.

Why put the great in Time their trust?
Whate'er on earth we prize
Of dust was made, and is but dust,
For all its brave disguise.
No boor but one day with the just
May triumph in the skies!

2.

Ambition doth but chase a gleam.
An idle toy the sword!
The crown a mockery; power a dream—
For Christ alone is Lord.
This lore King Henry learned:—Of him
I will a tale record.

3.

The tourney past, in festival
Baron and knight were met:
Last pomp it was that graced the hall
Of great Plantagenet;
A Prince for valour praised by all,
More famed for wisdom yet.

4.

The board rang loud with kingly cheer:
Light jest, and laugh, and song
Ran swiftly round from peer to peer:
Alone on that gay throng
The harper looked with eye severe,
The while in unknown tongue

5.

A mournful dirge abroad he poured;
Sad strains, and lorn, and slow:
Poor wreck of music prized and stored
Long centuries ago
On Briton hills ere Saxon sword
Had stained as yet their snow.

6.

"Strike other chords," the monarch cried.
"Whate'er thy words may be,
"They sound the dirge of festal pride:
"Warriors, not monks are we!
"The melodies to grief allied
"No music make for me."

7.

The harper's eye with warlike fire
One moment shone ; no more.
His lips, but now compressed in ire,
A smile disdainful wore,
While forth from each resounding wire
Its fiercer soul he tore.

8.

Louder and louder pealed the strain,
More wild, and soul-entrancing :
Picturing now helmets cloven in twain ;
Now swords like meteors glancing ;
Now trampling hosts o'er hill and plain
Retreating and advancing.

9.

Each measure, mightier than the last,
Rushed forth, stern triumphs wooing ;
Like some great Angel on the blast
From Heaven to Heaven pursuing
With outspread pinion, far and fast,
A host abhorred to ruin.

10.

The bard meanwhile with cold, stern air,
Looked proudly on the proud,
Fixing unmoved a victor's stare
On that astonished crowd—
'Till all the princes gathered there
Leaped up, and cried aloud :

11.

" What man, what chief, what crowned head,
" Eternal heir of fame,
" Of all that live, or all the dead,
" This praise shall dare to claim?"—
Then rose that British bard, and said,
" King Arthur is his name."

12.

" What sceptre grasped King Arthur's hand?"
" The sceptre of this Isle."
" What nations bled beneath his brand?"
" The Saxon foe erewhile."
" His tomb?" was Henry's next demand—
" He sleeps in yonder pile."

13.

Forth went the King with all his train,
At the mid hour of night;
They paced in pairs the silent plain
Under the red torch-light.
The moon was sinking in her wane,
The tower yet glimmered bright.

PART II.

1.

Through Glastonbury's cloister dim
The midnight winds were sighing;
Chaunting a low funereal hymn
For those in silence lying,
Death's gentle flock 'mid shadows grim
Fast bound, and unreplying.

2.

Hard by the monks their mass were saying.
The organ evermore
Its wave in alternation swaying
On that smooth swell upbore
The voice of their melodious praying
Toward Heaven's eternal shore.

3.

Ere long a princely multitude
Moved on through arches grey
Which yet, though shattered, stand where stood
(God grant they stand for aye!)
Saint Joseph's church of woven wood
On England's baptism day.

4.

The grave they found; their swift strokes fell
Piercing dull earth and stone.
They reached ere long an oaken cell,
And cross of oak whereon
Was graved "Here sleeps King Arthur well
"In the Isle of Avalon."

5.

The mail on every knightly breast,
The steel at each man's side,
Sent forth a sudden gleam: each crest
Bowed low its plumed pride:
Down o'er the coffin stooped a priest—
But first the monarch cried

6.

"Great King! in youth I made a vow
"Earth's mightiest son to greet:
"His hand to worship; on his brow
"To gaze; his grace entreat.
"Therefore, though dead, till noontide thou
"Shalt fill my royal seat!"

7.

Away the massive lid they rolled—
Alas! what found they there?
No kingly brow, no shapely mould;
But dust where such things were.
Ashes o'er ashes, fold on fold—
And one bright wreath of hair.

8.

Genevra's hair! like gold it lay:
For Time, though stern, is just;
And humbler things feel last his sway;
And Death reveres his trust.—
They touched that wreath; it sank away
From sunshine into dust!

9.

Then Henry lifted from his head
The conqueror's iron crown:
That crown upon that dust he laid,
And knelt in reverence down,
And raised both hands to Heaven, and said,
"Thou, God, art King alone!

10.

"Lie there my crown, since God decrees
"This head a couch as low.
"What am I better now than these
"Six hundred years ago?
"Henceforth all mortal pageantries
"I count an idle show."

11.

Such words King Henry spake: and ere
The cloister vaults had felt
Along their arches damp and bare
The last faint echo melt,
The nobles congregated there
On that cold pavement knelt:

12.

And each his coronet down laid ;
  And Christ his King adored :
And murmured in that mournful shade
  " Thou, God, alone art Lord.
" Like yonder hair at last shall fade
  " Each sceptre, crown, and sword."

SONNETS.

SONNETS.

I.

Love to the tender ; peace to those who mourn ;
Hope to the hopeless, hope that does not fail,
Whose symbol is the anchor, not the sail ;
Glory that spreads to Heaven's remotest bourn,
And to its centre doth again return
Like music ; health revisiting the frail ;
Freedom to those who pine in dungeons pale ;
Sorrows which God hath willed and Christ hath worn !
Omnipotence to be the poor man's shield ;
Light, uncreated light, to cheer the blind ;
Infinite mercy sent to heal and bind
The wounds encountered in life's well-fought field ;
All these are gifts of God ; nor these alone :
Himself He gives to all who make those gifts their own.

II.

Law and Grace.

Yes, I remember: once beneath a yoke
We walked, with jealous pride and painful fear;
For a stern footstep sounded ever near:
And, when that Presence dread the silence broke,
Austere and cold as if a statue spoke,
Each marble sentence smote upon my ear;
Yet "Thou shalt not" was all that I could hear—
So swiftly from its trance my spirit woke.
The sun was rising. Floods of light divine,
Golden, and crimson on the mountains played.
I saw the village spire like silver shine:
Eolian music filled the echoing shade:
And I could hear, through all the murmuring glen,
Music of moving Gods come down to live with men.

III.

Law and Anarchy.

One mighty Thought, the sure though secret germ
Of all the unbidden thoughts which throng the brain ;
One deep Emotion, centre, soul, and term
Of all the heart's desires that wax and wane ;
One living Law to quicken and constrain ;
To keep our acts and days in unison—
These we must have ; these three must have in one ;
Or we have thought and felt and lived in vain.
O'er the great deep within us Darkness broods :
And though, beneath the Spirit moving there,
Some waves, self-gleaming in their solitudes,
Swell up in transient beauty idly fair,
The Soul is still a chaos 'till God's Word
Rolls through it, and in Light her answer back is poured.

IV.

Churches.

A CASTLE strongly built, and eminent
Above the flats of Time, defaced, and gory;
A palace, where, in robes of kingly glory
Our spirits rest; among parched sands, a tent;
One sunlit isle in a vexed element;
A gallery, graced with all the pictured story
Of earth and man; a high observatory,
Whence eyes of seers for aye on Heaven are bent:
Such is yon Church: and round its tapering spire
I see, descending like a heavenly crown,
Immortal forms, a wreathed and beautiful choir,
Bearing in golden urns and baskets down
Angelic food; and scattering with the sound
Of hymns and chaunted psalms those demons hovering round!

V.

Ye praise the humble: of the meek ye say,
"Happy they live among their lowly bowers;
"The mountains, and the mountain-storms are ours."
Thus, self-deceivers, filled with pride alway,
Reluctant homage to the good ye pay,
Mingled with scorn like poison sucked from flowers—
Revere the humble; godlike are their powers:
No mendicants for praise of men are they.
The child who prays in faith "Thy will be done"
Is blended with that Will supreme which moves
A wilderness of worlds by Thought untrod;
He shares the starry sceptre, and the throne:
The man who as himself his neighbour loves
Looks down on all things with the eyes of God!

VI.

That depth of love the Church doth bear to thee
Thou knowest not yet; for thou not yet hast felt
The beatings of an infant's bosom melt
Into thine own; and all that mystery
Whereby, nought seeing, caring not to see,
The creature, instinct-taught, its food doth draw
By a sweet pressure and benignant law
Forth from its mother's breast perpetually.
But, by the blessings of thy future hearth,
By all its order, sanctity, and peace,
Forget not Her whose meek and tearful eyes
Have rested on thee ever from thy birth;
Whose sacraments have fed; whose litanies
Soft as Spring's breath woke first thy soul's increase!

VII.

Be still, ye Senates: hear, and God will speak.
"Through all the world, in every clime and zone,
"Will I the glory of my Name make known:
"And men alike or nations, if they seek,
"Shall find Me: yea, the humble and the weak,
"Shall sit beside Me, throned upon My throne;
"Seeing successive Babels lying prone,
"And God's consummate triumph in the meek."
O then, that nations had but faith to see
That, as each separate heart its powers doth draw
From one great fountain of Humanity,
So, by a solemn and unchanging law,
Upon the Kingdom God hath raised must all
The kingdoms of the earth stand firm—or fall.

VIII.

The Vastness of the Gospel lost in its Simplicity.

From end to end we glance; from Adam's fall
To Christ's triumphant death and victory,
At once—those mysteries that between them be
By man are known but scantly, if at all:
And thus in time our marvel waxes small;
Thus gazing down into an air-like sea
Its depth eludes us from its purity,
And all its priceless treasures vainly call
For gratitude or gladness. On we go,
Unmoved beneath a heaven of awe-struck eyes;
While purer beings, Angel minds that know
The cost of that great boon which we despise,
Look down on us, suspended from their skies,
With deeper awe than men on God bestow.

IX.

A Church-yard.

1.

It stands a grove of cedars vast and green,
Cathedral-wise disposed, with nave and choir,
And cross-shaped transept lofty and serene;
And altar decked in festival attire
With flowers like urns of white and crimson fire;
And chancel girt with vine-trailed laurel screen;
And aisles high arched with cypresses between—
Retreats of mournful love, and vain desire.
Within the porch a silver fount is breathing
Its pure, cold dews upon the summer air:
Round it are blooming herbs, and flowers (the care
Of all the angels of the Seasons) wreathing
Successively their unbought garniture
Round the low graves of the beloved poor.

X.

A Church-yard.

2.

But when the winds of night begin to move
Along the murmuring roofs, deep music rolls
Through all the vaults of this Cathedral grove;
A midnight service for departed souls.
Piercing the fan-like branches stretched above
Each chapel, oratory, shrine, and stall
Then a pale moonshine falls or seems to fall
On those cold grave-stones—altars reared by love
For a betrothal never to be ended;
And on the slender plants above them swinging;
And on the dewy lamps from these suspended;
And sometimes on dark forms in anguish clinging,
As if their bosoms to the senseless mould
Some vital warmth would add—or borrow of its cold.

XI.

Fame.

Aspiring souls! henceforward without blame
Revere in Faith, and fearlessly obey
That generous impulse which inspires your way.
Glory your spur may be, though not your aim.
Love hath its archetype, nor less hath Fame
In Heaven; there shines the light whereof one ray
Is Fame below: re-echoed thence for aye,
Spread the great echoes of God's sacred Name.
God's living Words through all the worlds sent forth,
Support those worlds by them ordained and made.
True Glory is God's sentence, rightly weighed.
His Lips establish all things: and his Eyes
Kindle the universal sacrifice,
And everlasting of the Heavens and Earth!

XII.

Felicitas at her Martyrdom.

Silence, ye crowds! how dare ye thus make start
An infant, feeding at its mother's breast,
Feeding on sacred food, and sacred rest?
Vain are your cries, your pity vain. Depart!
But ye, dread masters in death's fatal art,
Torturers! remain: and try, though shame-opprest,
Once more your skill; fulfil the dread behest:
Her head ye shall not bow, nor shake her heart.
The Lady's eyes alternately were bent
On Heaven, and on her child; a grave, sweet smile
Tenderly circling her pale lips the while;
Until at last the infant was content:
Then drooped her lids, and sighing o'er his sigh,
The mother's spirit sought its native sky.

XIII.

Faith, Hope, and Charity.

Love is the Star by which our course we steer;
Love for our kind its image glassed below:
And when the breeze of Hope begins to blow,
The radiance spreads of that dilated sphere
O'er Life's dark waters, nearer and more near.
A silver path that star appears to throw
Toward us; and with light that plain to sow
Which shakes beneath the shock of our career.
Thus is the brightness of our heavenly home,
Itself a beacon unto those that stray;
The beacon thus becomes the glittering way
To all whom Hope impels her seas to roam.
What then is Hope? a Faith that dares to move.
And what is Faith? the happy rest of Love!

XIV.

To a Just Lawyer.

Defrauded Justice, long a wanderer driven
From Law, her Temple, holy kept of old,
Though now the money-changers' strongest hold,
Invoked not vainly aid from thee: and Heaven
To thee that voice heroical hath given
Wherewith to all thy brethren thou hast called,
Standing alone among them disenthralled,
All chains of custom, fear, and interest riven.
Young Priest of Justice, what was their reply?
"Justice herself this human sacrifice
"Requires: if thou would'st serve her, rob and lie,
"So keeps the State her balanced equipoise"—
Such answer thou didst scorn; and hast for this,
Attained, fully to see its utter hollowness.

XV.

Blessed is he who hath not trod the ways
Of secular delights; or learned the lore
Which loftier minds are studious to abhor.
Blessed is he who hath not sought the praise
That perishes, the rapture that betrays:
Who hath not spent in Time's vainglorious war
His youth: and found, a school-boy at four-score,
How fatal are those victories which raise
Their iron trophies to a temple's height
On trampled Justice: who pursues not bliss,
But peace; and yet when summoned to the fight,
Combats as one who combats in the sight
Of God and of His Angels, seeking this
Alone, how best to glorify the right.

XVI.

Evidences of Religion.

1.

Letters there be too large for us to read:
Words shouted mock the sense, and beat the air—
Emblazon not in such a type thy creed:
Through such a trumpet peal not thou thy prayer.
Truth has her Saxon friends, of whom beware—
She is not yet at her extremest need:
To him who seeks her, pure in heart and deed,
Her pledges and her proofs are every-where.
Whate'er we hear or see; whate'er doth lie
Round us in Nature; all that human thought
In Science, or in Art, hath found, or wrought,
Stand fixed as notes on Truth's immortal book.
What need we more? a Commentary? look
Through all the mighty roll of History!

XVII.

Evidences of Religion.

2.

Ye who would build the Churches of the Lord!
[a]See that ye make the western portals low:
Let no one enter who disdains to bow.
High Truths profanely gazed at, unadored,
Will be abused at first, at last abhorred;
And many a learned, many a lofty brow
Hath rested, pillowed on a humbler vow
Than keen logicians notice or record.
O stainless peace of blest Humility!
Of all who fain would enter, few, alas!
Catch the true meaning of that kind, sad eye;
While thou, God's portress, stationed by the door,
Dost stretch thy cross so near the marble floor,
That children only, without bending, pass.

[a] An ancient custom.

XVIII.

The golden fruits of Earth's autumnal store
Are ours: and yet we know not how they grow.
Ours are the cooling winds that o'er us blow,
Albeit their causes we in vain explore.
And what if Heaven be willing to bestow,
Like Earth, her gifts, but hide her secret lore?
How to enjoy them, be it ours to know,
And to be grateful: seek for nothing more.
Unanswerable questions but disturb
That Faith by which alone Knowledge is won.
O Friend! walk boldly forward in the Sun,
Its vital warmth contented to absorb;
And to reflect its light. Others shall see
In thee, that radiance unbeheld by thee.

XIX.

TO ——.

Range all the Virtues van-ward in your band;
To these the helm, the spear, the sword be given!
True priests, true patriots to the mountains driven,
Fight not yourselves, and fear not for the land.
He who hath touched a truth, hath laid his hand
On that which moves the poles of Earth and Heaven—
Speak then, and wait: too rash was Moses' wand
That smote the rock his word alone had riven!
Truth without Love is worse than heresy:
Therefore call no man heretic: beware.
On Faith's high mountains raise your hands in prayer;
And sound God's trumpet. Know, if none reply,
If Truth and Wisdom access find to none,
Know this, and make it known, that ye your parts
have done.

XX.

Form of Consecration for a new House.

I BLESS thy new-raised threshold: let us pray
That never faithless friend, insulting foe
O'er this pure stone their hateful shadows throw:
May the poor gather round it day by day.
I bless this hearth: thy children here shall play:
Here may their graces and their virtues blow:
May sin defile it not; and want and woe
And sickness seldom come, nor come to stay.
I bless thy House. I consecrate the whole
To God. It is His Temple. Let it be
Worthy of Him, confided thus to thee.
Man's dwelling like its lord enshrines a soul:
It hath great destinies, wherein do lie
Self-sown, the seeds of Immortality.

XXI.

On Earth, as it is in Heaven.

Not without witness, just, and gracious Lord!
Not without witness art Thou left. The sea,
The mountains, and the forests preach of Thee:
Yea, for Thy ceaseless service well accord
The World Thy temple, and its shrine Thy Word.
The birds, the insects, yield Thee praise! but we—
Our very worship is Idolatry,
While but from fear or custom stands adored
That which remains unloved, almost unknown.
O might our moral world Thy laws obey,
As outward Nature doth her course fulfil,
Calm as the seasons, sure as night and day!
This were the granting of all prayer—Thy Will
Thus, thus on earth even as in heaven were done.

XXII.

A Sermon.

Most holy brethren; Prophets, Priests, and Kings!
Why start ye, friends? your Faith methinks is small!
His Father's name, his own may well appal
The secret sinner to his mask who clings:
But ye have put away all meaner things.
Ye are a Royal Priesthood, one and all:
Take then your vestments apostolical,
And wear them as the Angels wear their wings.
But O, if Prophets, evermore declare
God's judgments; what shall be, and what hath been:
Wake conscience up: strike dumb astonished sin:
If Priests ye be, be diligent in prayer.
If Kings, your delegated sceptres bear
Serene, and rule in faith the world within.

XXIII.

The Flesh is weak.

What man can hear sweet sounds and dread to die?
O for a music that might last for ever!
Abounding from its sources like a river
Which through the dim lawns streams eternally!
Virtue might then uplift her crest on high,
Spurning those myriad bonds that fret and grieve her:
Then all the powers of hell would quake and quiver
Before the ardours of her awful eye.
Alas for Man with all his high desires,
And inward promptings fading day by day!
High-titled honour pants while it expires;
And clay-born glory turns again to clay.
Low instincts last: our great resolves pass by
Like winds whose loftiest pæan ends but in a sigh.

XXIV.

The Alexandrian Version of the Scriptures.

Beside a little humble Oratory
There sat a noble lady all alone:
Over her knees a parchment lay, whereon
Her slender fingers traced our Christian story.
Old Nile flowed noiseless by: through vapours dun
A low-hung moon let forth its last faint glory
On all the dark green flats, and temples hoary,
That grey and ghostly through the morning shone—
Theckla! Mankind will ne'er forget that zeal
Which, ere the night-bird stay her melody,
Raises thee daily to the Church's needs:
No doubts, no fears hast thou—thou dost not feel
The cold, damp winds of morning as they sigh,
Murmuring forlorn through leagues of murmuring reeds!

XXV.

On reading the "Mores Catholici."

I saw a wild-swan flying toward the West,
Following the traces of a sunken Sun.
The sky grew momently more pale; yet on
She urged her indefatigable quest;
Faint crimson lights suffusing still that breast,
Out of whose deep recesses forth she flung
Exhausted wailings of immortal song.
Wind-scattered dirges, psalmody unblest!
Sad lover of the Past! in vain that flight!
A law there is that bids the earth roll round,
And marvellously marries day and night,
The first, and last. Yet drop not to the ground!
Once more the orb thou lovest on thee shall rise,
Far-shining from the East of thine abandoned skies.

XXVI.

Now, now, ye kings and rulers of the earth,
Lift up your eyes unto the hills eterne,
Whence your salvation comes. From Earth's dark urn
The great floods burst! From each ancestral hearth
Look forth ye bold and virtuous poor, look forth:
The meteor signs of woes to come discern;
And whence the danger be not slow to learn:
Then greet it with loud scorn, and warlike mirth.
The banner of the Church is ever flying!
Less than a storm avails not to unfold
The cross emblazoned there in massy gold—
Away with doubts and sadness, tears and sighing:
It is by Faith, by Patience, and by dying,
That we must conquer, as our sires of old!

XXVII.

Simplicity and Steadfastness of Mind.

When plain and city, garden, mount and wood,
Under the Flood's blank tablet lay unseen,
Three objects only met thy vision keen,
Angel of Earth! in that wide solitude:
The Sun; that shining and unshadowed flood:
And (heaven-ward lifted on its tide serene)
The Ark, sole-drifting where a world had been—
No meaner image lured thine eye from God.
Our eyes are full of idols: O! that we
From those soul-murdering gewgaws of the day,
Might turn, and fix our gaze immoveably
Upon God's Church, tracking its marvellous way
Over the ocean of God's awful love—
And on that steadfast Sun which lights her from above.

XXVIII.

The Spiritual Ties symbolized through the Natural.

Father!—the childless Angels cannot call
Upon their God, by that most sacred name!
Brother!—the seed of Adam, one and all,
With Christ Himself true brotherhood we claim.
King, Prophet, Priest!—the whole predestined frame
Of life in one symbolic mould is cast;
To prove of Heaven a mystic antepast,
And a pure language to reveal the same.
But we have scorned that old and simple life;
And, building social Babels, fain to reach
Yea storm high Heaven itself, through hate and strife
Confused that Catholic and Godlike speech:
Therefore God's face is dark as in a glass
To us—the Patriarchs saw Him face to face.

XXIX.

Penitence.

From grave to grave I pace, inwardly sighing,
"Is not this place for my repentance meet?"
Borne through dark boughs the night-winds unreplying
The mournful question mournfully repeat.
To you I turn, under the damp grass lying,
O Friends; and pray you from your dim retreat
To breathe a spirit of sorrow holy and sweet,
Over this heart dried up, in languor dying.
And thou, in Palestine's cold shadows sleeping,
'Mid dust with tears of thine so often blent,
Give me one gush of thy perpetual weeping,
Holy St. Mary, ever penitent!
Night after night fresh dews revive the flowers:—
Ah! that one Baptism should alone be ours!

XXX.

Discipline of the Church.

(PENITENTIAL I.)

BATHS of the Church! seclusions sad, yet dear!
Amid your cloistral caves, and shadowy cells,
That dark-stoled hermitress, Repentance, dwells,
Haunting your loneliest shades with patient cheer;
And agitating oft with hallowing tear
The streams Bethesdal of your healing wells;
Or murmuring low her grief-taught oracles
For souls too weak to feel, too proud to hear.
"Alas! world-wearied Spirits, fly no more!
"These springs make strong the feeble knees: these dews
"Efface the lines of lingering care; infuse
"Immortal youth in bosoms of threescore:—
"Draw near. The Angels shall your introit sing,
"Fanning your weary foreheads with assuasive wing."

XXXI.

Discipline of the Church.

(PENITENTIAL II.)

Too much of mirth—too many smiles—depart
Vain phantoms of the Sense, false baits of sin!
One hour for holy mourning who may win
Amid the clamour of the world's loud mart?
A sigh throws wide the portals of the heart:
Pure spirits enter: good resolves begin:
How wholesome then that care, how kind that art,
The highways of man's life o'er-shadowing
With cypress thickets, at wide intervals,
And gardens bowered 'mong cedar-darkened rifts,
Hollowed with dewy vaults, and silent halls;
Where smooth once more the soul her forehead lifts,
And pleasurably spreads a widening eye,
Shrunk up too long and dimmed by the sun's tyranny!

XXXII.

The Church Persecuted.

"Large as the beads of this dark rosary
"Was each successive drop that slowly fell
"Down from my Saviour's temples, audible
"To the earth's beating heart. O agony!
"I had forgotten them! forget not me,
"Thou merciful Redeemer. Like a knell
"My sinful Past salutes me! Let me dwell
"Henceforth in that sad garden, Lord, with Thee."
Even thus the Holy Church (with lifted palms
On her wet eyelids pressed; and forehead pale
Depressed beneath a sable cypress veil)
Chaunteth all night her penitential psalms:
Nor from her mournful litanies can cease
Until the sun shall rise, and give her peace.

XXXIII.

Magdalene.

Let the Repentant on Thy head, O Lord!
Lavish their precious ointments, odours sweet.
Tears let the Pardoned bring, an offering meet
For hearts long heavy, now to peace restored.
I am a wretched creature, self-abhorred.
When I would shed my tears upon Thy feet,
Unholy Shame, and Sorrow's wasting heat
Dry up the streams, which else these eyes had poured
Profusely forth for days, and months, and years.
But heavenly mourning is a gift from Heaven;
Distilled like honey-dews, at fall of even,
Upon our thirsting palms with touch benign.
Therefore, O Lord, an humble prayer is mine:
Grant Thou this weary soul the "gift of tears."

XXXIV.

On a Picture of the Magdalene.

Weeper perpetual, of whom men say
Not that she lived so long, "but so long wept;"
And in her fond imagination crept
(Fearful, yet fond) to those blest feet each day:
There knelt to wash them: there to wipe them lay:
There in her shining locks caught them and kept:
And hallowed thus, a tender love-adept,
Henceforth those glittering tresses never grey!—
Fulfilled thy Master's word hath been! Where'er
Thy Lord is preached art thou remembered, making
Repentance dear as Innocence, or dearer.
Thine eyes like heavens by midnight rains left clearer,
How oft we see thee thus through deserts bare,
Thy sad yet solaced way in silence taking!

XXXV.

Discipline of the Church.

(COMMEMORATIVE.)

With solemn forms, benign solicitudes,
(But each a Sacramental type and pledge
Of Grace,) the Church inweaves a sheltering hedge
Around her garden vale in the wild woods;
Giving Heaven's calm to Nature's varying moods.
She plants a cross on every pine-girt ledge:
A chancel by each river's lilied edge.
Where'er her Catholic dominion broods,
Behold how two Infinities are mated,
The Mighty and Minute, by the control
Of Love or Duty, linked with care sublime!
On earth no spot, no fleeting point of time,
Within our mind no thought, within our soul
No feeling, doth she leave unconsecrated.

XXXVI.

The "Rectory of Valehead."

A CEDAR-CONE from Carmel! stored with seeds
Which, might they ripen in the sun and dew
Of our ungenial West, ere long would strew
Our desolate mountains, and o'er-shade our meads
With forests such as earth no longer feeds!
Could man once more the sacred growth renew
Then God's immortal breeze would wander through
Their midnight boughs—that vital spirit which breeds
Life without end. And be it known to you,
Ye who would build, that of this wood alone,
Holy, primeval, incorruptible,
That House in which the Mighty One will dwell
Must be constructed: and with blocks of stone
As noiselessly raised up as those great forests grew.

XXXVII.

The Beatific Vision of the Earth.

1.

Glad childhood's dream of marvels past, we rise,
Still on our cheeks the flush of sleep remaining;
And roam the wastes of Earth, our eyelids straining
The glories of that dream to realize.
Nor seek in vain. Stream, bird, or cloud replies,
(Echoes that mock young passion's amorous feigning)
Fancy shines starlike forth 'mid daylight waning,
And Hope the night-bird sings 'neath shrouded skies.
At last the charm is broken: day by day
Drops some new veil, until the countenance bare
Of that ice-idol, blank Reality,
Confronts us full with cold, and loveless eye—
Then dies our heart, unless that faith we share
Whose touch makes all things gold, and gives us youth for aye.

XXXVIII.

The Beatific Vision of the Earth.

2.

Hail Earth, for man's sake cursed, yet blessing man!
The Saviour trod thine herbage, breathed thine air:
Henceforward, not alone through symbols, fair,
Thou shewest, delivered from thine ancient ban,
Memorial bloom withheld since death began:
Thy Maker's glory doomed at last to share
Even now that light transfiguring thou dost wear
For us, which once adorned His forehead wan—
"All things are new." O sing it, heavenly choirs!
And ye, the choir of God's great Church below,
The Poets! sound it on your deep-toned lyres:
From every mountain-top the tidings blow—
"All things are new." The Earth hath thrown aside
Her mourning weeds, and sits a pale, and veiled bride.

XXXIX.

The Beatific Vision of the Earth.

3.

Cowering beneath a semilucid veil,
A semilucid bridal veil of snow,
Which from the wreath that binds her temples pale
Down to her white and slender feet doth flow,
She sits. I hear her breathings soft and low:
They shake the vine-leaves in that garland frail—
Like Mary's when she heard th' Angelic "Hail,"
Dimly I see her blushes come and go.
And now, that veil thrown back, her head she raises,
Fixing upon the stars her starlike eyes—
As though she felt that Heaven on which she gazes
Her bosom rises: lo! her hands, they rise:
She also rises. Time it is to meet
Her Lord, and bless "the light of His returning feet."

XL.

Merit.

She who loves much without a pang will own
That she hath nothing of herself; receives
Nothing of right. The love her bridegroom gives
Breathes on her like a bud each hour new-blown,
Still fresh, but killed if plucked. This Truth is known
By every soul that to its Saviour cleaves
With the betrothed faith of Love—nor grieves
To owe its all to Christ and Christ alone.
O ye who speak so loftily of works,
Look deep into your inmost heart, and try
If there no drop of Pride's black poison lurks;
Of loveless Faith, or Infidelity,
That dares not trust a Grace it hath not proved,
Or lean upon the Love of one unloved.

XLI.

Good Works.

"Their works shall follow them."

Self-slighting children of the holy breast,
And of God's holy, holy-making Spirit!
Your father's glory, and your mother's rest
Ye shall indeed possess—but not by merit.
By virtue of your birth ye shall inherit
Your covenanted crowns; offspring, confest
Before the great assembly of the Blest,
Of Him whose word proclaims to all that fear it
"Grace, grace alone shall raise the just to Heaven:
"Yet there, the works of Grace shall follow them"—
Frail flowers on earth, from Faith's immortal stem
Springing, at last assoiled from mortal leaven,
And changed to stars, 'tis yours to stand on high,
Memorial lights to burn through clear Eternity!

XLII.

Moral application of Miracles.

If thou art blind with error like a hood
Bound o'er thine eyes: if thy distempered ears
Catch now no more the music of the spheres:
If one thou art of that great multitude
Which faints for lack of wisdom's manna food:
If thou art dumb, and canst not say thy prayers;
Fevered with weakness, palsied with despairs,
Possessed by legioned Passion's demon brood:
If thou with sin, as with a leprosy
Art foul; among the tombs naked and bound—
Oh! think of Him who walked Earth's suffering ground
Healing, and giving peace: before whose feet
The natural laws of mortal misery
Melted like frost before the vernal heat.

XLIII.

TO ———.

How oft that haughty and far-flashing eye,
Have I not seen thee to the wide heavens raise,
Or on the dark earth root thy tyrannous gaze
As on a scroll with piercing scrutiny!
Great scorn it seemed and great indignity
That aught should mock thy search:—and yet that haze
Which veils the loftiest, deepest things, obeys
Be sure, the cloud-compelling Power on high.
Our life is finite—let the mind be so;
And therefore bound the Spirit's appetites.
Some things we cannot, some we should not know.
Wisdom there is that weakens, lore that blights—
He too that walks among the eternal lights,
Casts, as He moves, His shadow down below!

XLIV.

The Constellation of the Plough.

Type of celestial labour, toil divine,
That nightly downward from the glistening skies
Showerest thy light on these expectant eyes!
Around thee in their stations ever shine
Full many a radiant shape and emblemed sign;
Swords, sceptres, crowns, bright tresses, galaxies
Of all that soaring fancy can devise—
Yet none methinks so truly great as thine!
On, ever on: while He who guides thee flings
His golden grain along the azure way
Do thou thy sleepless work, and toiling, say
"O men, so sedulous in trivial things,
"Why faint amid your loftier labours? Why
"Forget the starry seed, and harvests of the sky?"

XLV.

Natural Religion.

Search ye the Heart of man until ye find
That which is deepest. Raise your eyes again
Up through the loftiest region of his Mind:
And in each spacious, and serene domain
The same calm Presence ye shall mark enshrined:
The Thought of God—For pleasure, or for pain,
It fills the one great soul of all our kind:
And Conscience to her breast this Truth doth strain.—
Away with proofs, and laboured argument
To 'stablish that which is the ultimate,
The ground, o'er which all other notions pass!
Man may distort God's Image, not create—
We dim (too closely o'er the semblance bent)
With our own breath pure Reason's mystic glass.

XLVI.

It was not with your gold, or with your merit,
You bought that peace celestial now your own.
You did not those heart-quickening hopes inherit,
Like youthful princes born to grace a throne.
These are the fruits of that eternal Spirit,
Who showers His grace on faith, and faith alone:
Whose yoke but steadies those who gently bear it,
Whose presence can but through His gifts be shewn.
These are the proofs, th' assurance which you thought
That you were seeking; while, intent to shun
Truth's living Lord, yourself alone you sought.
Now you have found yourself in Him, and won
The bloodless triumphs of the fields He fought:
The rest your own right hand must teach—Ride on!

XLVII.

The "Golden Grove[a]."

Stranger! yet friend! who from the ways unblest
Of common life retired, art pleased to rove
The autumnal alleys of this "Golden Grove,"
By woodland odours, sportive gleams carest,
That lure thee forward in thine easy quest
Of Wisdom bowered with Beauty and with Love;
Beware! a presence that thou deemest of
Is here concealed. From out the air-rocked nest
Of every leaf, looks forth some Dream divine.
The grass thou treadest—the weeds, are cyphered o'er
With mystic traces, and sybilline lore.
Each branch is precious as that golden bough
Hung by Æneas (ere he passed below)
Upon the sable porch of Proserpine.

[a] Jeremy Taylor's "Year of Sermons," called by that name.

XLVIII.

The Dying Platonist.

Fain would I call that Night which spreads so fast
Out of the vault of Death's abysmal skies,
A gentle gloom like that of thy dark eyes.
Fain would I say that we, like children, cast
Our blind-fold faces with a timid haste
Into a mother's lap—ere long to rise
Some little forfeit and some sweet surprise
The playful Future of a playful Past.
But ah! it is not so. Reality
Makes a dread language of this ebbing breath;
Preaching those awful homilies of Death
Which sound so like each other at their close.
The least of Sins is *Infinite:* it throws
A shade into the face of the Most High.

XLIX.

Initiative Faith.

You ask us for a sign, misdoubting friend,
And you will then believe. A thousand eyes
To the same point fixed in the same clear skies
Are raised at once—a thousand foreheads bend
Before one breeze, by you unfelt. Attend.
He is not humble, and he is not wise,
Who deems no star is there, that breeze denies,
Because his science cannot comprehend
How shines that light, or whence the zephyr blows,
And whether Alpine or Caucasian snows
Have cast their coolness on its wings serene.
If you see nought, O! trust the eyes of those
Who read dark tablets by that light unseen:
Desire, believe, and pray: Peace comes where Faith
hath been.

L.

Conversion.

Loud as that trumpet doomed to raise the dead
God's voice doth sometimes fall on us in fear:
More often with a music low yet clear,
Soft whispering "It is I: be not afraid."
And sometimes, mingling strangely joy with dread,
It thrills the spirit's caverned sepulchre
Deep as that voice which on the awe-struck ear
Of him, the three-days-buried, murmuring, said
"Come forth"—and he arose. O Christians, hail
As brethren all on whom our glorious Sun,
No matter how, or when, or where, hath shone
With vital warmth: and neither mourn nor rail
Because one light, itself unchanging, showers
A thousand colours on a thousand flowers.

LI.

The Communion of Saints.

How many precious influences meet
In this frail flower the orphan of the year!
To her the Sun, her little span to cheer,
Sends down two momentary heralds, heat
And light, and pours his tribute at her feet:
Yea, every atom of earth's solid sphere
Shoots forth attractions that concentrate here,
And in this lowly creature's pulses beat.
Then wherefore fear that any human soul
Small though it be, is worthless in His sight
Whose mercy, like His power, is infinite?
Why doubt that God's eternal love can reach
At once the vital soul of all and each;
And one vast Sympathy inspire the whole?

LII.

Sad is our youth, for it is ever going,
Crumbling away beneath our very feet:
Sad is our life, for it is ever flowing
In current unperceived, because so fleet:
Sad are our hopes, for they were sweet in sowing,
But tares, self-sown, have over-topped the wheat:
Sad are our joys, for they were sweet in blowing—
And still, O still, their dying breath is sweet.
And sweet is youth, although it hath bereft us
Of that which made our childhood sweeter still:
And sweet is middle life, for it hath left us
A nearer Good to cure an older Ill:
And sweet are all things, when we learn to prize them
Not for their sake, but His who grants them or denies them!

LIII.

Constancy of Character.

Man's mind should be of marble, not of clay.
A rock-hewn temple, large, majestic, bare;
Not decked with gewgaws, but with life-long care
And toil heroic shaped to stand for aye:
Not like those plaster baubles of the day,
In which the lightest breath of praise or prayer
Crumbles the gauds wherewith they garnished are:
In which we dare not think, and cannot pray;
In which God will not dwell. O Constancy!
Where thou art wanting all our gifts are naught.
Friend of the martyrs—both of those who die,
And those who live—beneath that steadfast eye
The breast-plates and the beaming helms were wrought
Of all our far-famed Christian chivalry!

LIV.

On hearing the English Liturgy at Rome.

Welcome once more, majestic words and dear!
And you, free children of our sacred isle,
In that habitual language lisped erewhile
Beside a mother's knee, with joy not fear,
Taught thus to seek your Father, and draw near,
Give thanks! God greets you with paternal smile!
Vain without this are chaunt and echoing pile:
They charm the sense, the soul they cannot cheer.
Sing once again! deeper and deeper still!
Intone, recite or read, now low, now loud:
With every collect, psalm, and canticle
Old times, old faces on the memory crowd.
I see once more my country, green and proud;
And—o'er that foreground—Sion's citied hill!

LV.

Worship of the Blessed Virgin.

Ave Maria! holiest, heavenliest maid!
O truly virgin-hearted—turn thine eyes
Too long averted with a sad surprise,
That cheek suffused with sorrow's crimson shade—
Turn them (if God permit indeed such aid,
And mortal voices reach thee in the skies)
Once more on those misguided votaries—
Their fault those eyes, that cheek shall best upbraid!
Most innocent of mourners as thou art,
And yet of all most blessed, why, O why
Must this sword also pierce thy tender heart?
These rites assail thy humble purity?
On earth hidden and hushed, alone, apart,
Why shouldst thou be disquieted on high?

LVI.

Ritual Excess.

Hermes! unearthly were those melodies
That closed the lids of Argus! one by one
His hundred orbs, by a sweet force pressed down,
Yielded successively, like Heaven's bright eyes
When moonlight spreads along her glistening skies.
Smiling he sank, more pleased the more undone,
Inebriate, while through those thin lids the sun
Shone warmly without light!—Thy sorceries,
Italian Church, on our lethargic mould
Work like those songs! Procession, Legend, Rite
Sap thus a vigilant Faith with spells of Art;
'Till the ever-waking spirit in man's heart
Relinquishes at last its sacred hold
Of God's prime creature, beatific Light!

LVII.

A Romanist's Question answered.

Her beauty, and her venerable grace;
Her depth, her breadth, her cross-surmounted height;
Her planetary order, grave yet bright;
And all her hallowed claims of time and place—
These call you loudly back to that embrace
In which the world lay folded through the night
Of ages, dazzled by no harsher light
Than the meek halo round her reverend face.
Nor is it shameful, having erred, to mourn;
Nor, to a generous nature, hard to bend—
Why then the earth with mad contention rend?
Why, boasting freedom, peace and safety scorn?
—Good friend, because to those the Truth makes free,
Sacred as Law itself is lawful Liberty.

LVIII.

The Papal Empire.

Cities, like men, have physiognomic traits,
In which their genius, bent, and history
Lie bare before the seer's unflattered eye.
In Rome what mark we? wrecks of iron days,
World-bridging power, sports ruthless—'mid that maze
Rise Attic shapes—some obelisk hard by
O'er the lone courts its spear-like shade from high
Projects—perchance its mystic gravure says,
"The Roman boast of universal Power,
"Scandal of crowns and hearths—the Grecian dream
"Of Beauty perfect in a finite mould—
"And Sacerdotal Egypt's Priestcraft old—
"Three steps of one vast throne o'er earth supreme
"Shall these be yet. Mankind, beware that hour!"

LIX.

Reply of the Anchoret when the British Bishops demanded how they were to receive the pretensions of Augustine.

Obedience shall we pay him, man of God?
He speaks, a master, where he stands a guest.
His words come forth as from a reverend breast—
Shall then our Priestly tiar and Prophet's rod
Bow down to one who scarce has touched our sod?
Say, what of Rome's decree shall be the test?
Must she command the North that sways the West,
And rule this isle of old by Martyrs trod?
Then spake the Hermit from his turf-built seat,
"True Power's Familiar is Humility!
"Approach him: if he rise your steps to meet
"Kneel down, and blessing at his hand entreat:
"But if the lust of thrones be in his eye
"Count him a thing of nought, and pass him by."

LX.

Rationalism.

Notions of notions docketed and classed:
Shadows self-chased along a barren ground:
Pale tracks of foam in wandering waves half-drowned:
Thin shreds of song half lost in winter's blast—
These starved and squalid Systems cannot last.
Vainly man's plummet the great deep would sound;
Man's arms enclose within their pigmy bound
Of sense, the Present, Future, and the Past.
Well skilled to trace the diagrams of thought,
Our modern Muse (with aid of compass) shines
In abstract lore of surfaces and lines:
Courses along Truth's limits; enters not;
Steps not across the threshold; dares not tread
The space within devote to God and to the dead.

LXI.

Sorrow.

Count each affliction, whether light or grave,
God's messenger sent down to thee. Do thou
With courtesy receive him: rise and bow:
And ere his shadow pass thy threshold crave
Permission first his heavenly feet to lave.
Then lay before him all thou hast. Allow
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow,
Or mar thy hospitality, no wave
Of mortal tumult to obliterate
The soul's marmoreal calmness. Grief should be
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate;
Confirming, cleansing, raising, making free;
Strong to consume small troubles; to commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end.

LXII.

Meditation.

What is more glorious than a noble Thought?
What is more blessed?—In that thought to dwell!
To build your bower within it; scoop a cell;
Inlay with precious ores a secret grot
With mossy seats around: to wander not;
But lean in peace above its caverned well,
Yielding to that pure runnel's murmuring spell,
Or sound of sighing forests heard remote.
Such holy promptings moved of old our sires
Those vast cathedrals cruciform to raise
That make us dwell *within* the Cross: and still,
Sweet as the gradual breeze from all their choirs
Moving with dawning day o'er wood and hill,
The thoughts by those grey Minsters quickened to God's praise!

LXIII.

O THAT to every cottage hearth were brought
The tomes divine of Poet and of Sage!
This is the pious wish, the generous rage
Of kind and lofty natures, knowing not
That what we seek in vain is ours unsought.
The lore pressed out from every clime and age,
Truth's quickening soul, the "throne and equipage"
Of all things great in act or just in thought,
Live in God's word: and where that word extends
In essence or in germ they all are there—
He who can pray can sing. For is not prayer
The soul's collected utterance that ascends
In undivided harmony to Him
Who sits between the harping Seraphim?

LXIV.

Nature and Grace.

That Light which is the Life alone can give
The living Power which makes us love the Light:
Love it in Faith, and with the Godlike might
Of Love, to Love's one object cling and cleave—
But we can only have what we receive.
Instinctively man's eye discerns the Right;
But this we lack—the strength to scale its height,
That we with it might dwell, and in it live.
Science and Song, their constellated wings
Waving from Eastern unto Western skies,
Soar but to sink. Not any bird that flies
Mounts straight ascending:—Grace, and Grace alone
Shoots heavenward, as from yonder altar-stone
The sacrificial flame triumphant springs!

LXV.

Virgin! at placid morn, and when the airs
Of evening fan her flushed and throbbing sky,
Send up, like homeward doves, thy thoughts on high,
And mingle with those gentle thoughts thy prayers.
Blameless thou art: but One there is who dares
Assail for ever, and remorselessly
The soul of finest grain and purest dye;
And in the softest herbage sprinkles tares.
Virgin! that Power which sends the winds of Even
To rock the blossoms on the boughs of May,
That Power the Spirits of the Mind obey,
And come and go at His command alone.
Yea, but for Him the loftiest star of Heaven
Would drop, supplanted, from his glittering throne.

LXVI.

Providence is that thread on which are strung
Like beads, all Acts and Epochs great and small:
Where diamonds glitter at wide interval
The sanguine and the sable gems among.
"Wreathe it to one wide crown, and be it hung
"Henceforth aloft in Time's memorial hall,
"Suspend it o'er the symbol of the Fall"—
This is the burden of the angelic song.
But we must live by Faith: waiting the time
Solemnly set apart in God's great plan
For joining the Beginning and the Ending—
Then Truth and Love and Joy with choral blending
Shall chaunt the mythic tale of Life—Then Man
Shall mark the metre and recurrent rhyme.

LXVII.

Universal History.

Methought I gazed upon a dusky Round,
Our mortal planet's monumental urn—
Around its orb with many a spiral turn
Ascending, a procession slowly wound.
There saw I laurelled poets, kings renowned;
Prophets I saw from earth's remotest bourne:
There saw I maids and youths, old men forlorn,
And conquerors full-armed, and captives bound.
A Funeral pomp methought it seemed far down
In pale relief; and, side by side, therein
Hooded, there paced, a Sorrow and a Sin:
Midway in ampler ring, and vision clear,
A Sacrifice embraced that mighty sphere—
Above, a lovely Bridal was its crown.

LXVIII.

Truth.

Centre of Earth! keystone of Heaven's great dome!
In thee the world's vast arches rest suspended:—
Within thy zodiac's belt round all extended
The orb of Knowledge evermore doth roam.
Thou art the lamp and hearth of each man's home—
How many wondrous powers in thee are blended!
By thee we live; by thee from death defended,
We find a second cradle in the tomb.
In thee all good things breathe, without thee die:
Strength, Justice, Loyalty, (Truth's noble thrall)
Song, Science, all the Loves; yea most of all,
Though deemed too oft thy rival, Charity,
Whose golden arrows swift as sunbeams fly,
And scatter seeds of life where'er they fall!

LXIX.

Frescoes by Masaccio.

Well hast thou judged that sentence "had ye Faith,
"Ye could move mountains." In those forms I see
What God at first appointed man to be;
His image crowned, triumphant over death.
Born of that Word which never perisheth,
Those Prophets here resume the empery
Of old in Eden lost. Their eye, their breath
Cancels disease, lays prone the anarchy
Of Passion's fiercest waves. Secret as Fate,
Like Fate's the powers they wield are infinite.
Their very thoughts are laws: their will is weight—
On as they move in majesty and might
The demons yield their prey, the graves their dead:
And to her centre Earth is conscious of their tread.

LXX.

Why make ye thus your boast, O mortal Nations?
Why boast ye thus your numbers and your might?
What are ye to the vanquished generations
That couch beneath the sod in utter night?
All dead they lie, dead as their expectations,
In that great city void of sound and light,
Which undermines your towns, and mocks the flight
Of soaring hopes that end in desolations.
Remote from Fortune's rude or prosperous gust,
All of one kingdom, kindred, strength, and pride,
All like they lie, as dust is like to dust;
Countless, yet adding hourly to their store
Thousands drawn down on Life's subsiding tide
Into the dark caves of the seen no more!

LXXI.

National Strength.

What is it makes a Nation truly great?
Her sons: her sons alone: not theirs, but they!
Glory and gold are vile as wind and clay
Unless the hands that grasp them consecrate.
And what is that in man by which a state
Is clad in splendour like the noontide day?
Virtue—Dominion ebbs, and Arts betray:
Virtue alone abides. But what is that
Which Virtue's self doth rest on; that which yields her
Light for her feet, and daily, heavenly bread;
Which from demoniac pride, and madness shields her,
And storms that most assail the loftiest head?
The Christian's humble faith, that faith which cheers
The orphan's quivering heart, and stays the widow's tears.

LXXII.

To Honour.

Bright and majestic Spirit! faithful mate
Of all true Virtue, and that generous Fame
Which guards a spotless, seeks a glorious name
From Love not Pride; but seeks, content to wait,
And prompt to share it—Angel of the State!
Sanctioning Order with religious awe;
Taking the harshness and the sting from Law;
Scorn from the lowly, envy from the great;—
Come to this region of thine ancient sway!
With thy heroic and inspiring smile
Illume our perils and our fears beguile!
Was it not here that Alfred built his throne,
And high-souled Sydney waived a throne away?—
The land is strong which thou hast made thine own.

NOTES.

NOTES.

Introduction.

The Waldenses of Piedmont, whose origin is lost in the gloom of antiquity.

"Is it not extraordinary," says the historian Leger, "that it has never once happened that any one of our princes or their ministers should have offered the least contradiction to their Valdensian subjects, who have again and again asserted in their presence, 'We are descended from those who, from father to son, have preserved entire the apostolical faith, in the valleys which we now occupy. Permit us therefore to have that free exercise of our religion which we have enjoyed from time out of mind, before the dukes of Savoy became princes of Piemond.'"

Page 18.

The Nobla Leycon.

The following account of the Nobla Leycon, or "Leyczon," is extracted from Dr. Gilly's article entitled "Valdenses," in the Encyclopædia Britannica:—

"It is written in the Romaunt, or Provençal dialect, (which in its several inflexions, with such variations only as time produces, still constitutes the vulgar tongue of the Cottian Alps,) and contains the confession of faith of the Vaudès of that age. The first

part of this truly noble lesson is an exhortation to watchfulness, prayer, and good works, and to the study of Scripture, in consideration of the uncertainty of the approach of the last day, and of the hour of retribution. This is followed by an acknowledgment of the Holy Trinity, 'the Three Persons and one God.' The doctrine of original sin is stated; 'because Adam sinned at the beginning.' The mention of free-will, or the power in man of doing good or evil, leads to some beautiful moral and religious instructions, and to a summary of the Old and New Testament history. The Virgin Mother of Jesus is called the Holy Mary, 'Sancta Maria;' the Glorious Virgin, 'La Virgina Gloriosa;' and Our Lady, 'Nostra Dona.'

"Baptismal regeneration is asserted, continence is commended. The Lesson is also urgent on the precepts 'Swear not at all,' 'Avenge not thine adversary,' 'Forgive every offence,' 'Persecute none, for the holy men of old never persecuted.' It proceeds to state, that persecution was becoming common on the part of false Christians and their Pastors; and that they who would not curse or lie, or defraud their neighbours, or avenge themselves upon their enemies, were called Vaudès, and pronounced worthy of punishment. Then comes a description of false Christians, and of confession without true penitence, and of absolution bought with money, and of mass said for the dying and the dead; which is followed by a declaration that such practices are corrupt and unavailing to the sinner, and that all the popes from Sylvester the First to the present time, and that all the cardinals, bishops, and abbots in the world cannot of themselves grant absolution; for it is God only who can pardon sin.

"Then, lest the tenour of this language should be misunderstood, the Noble Lesson explains that it is the duty of pastors to preach and to pray, to feed the flock with divine doctrine, to enforce discipline, to insist upon true repentance, upon unreserved confession, upon the duty of fasting and almsgiving, and fervent prayer, with faith and charity.

" It sums up the whole by urging, if we would be true followers of Jesus Christ, that 'we must be poor in spirit, we must be chaste and humble before God, we must imitate Christ's example, and obey His precepts; for this is the way to prove ourselves to be true Christians, and to be ready against the last judgment.'"

The date of this remarkable document is A.D. 1100.

PAGE 26.

Men spread abroad a rumour.

This belief was entertained by the Waldensian peasants.

PAGE 82.

Ha, how well
That chief made answer.

Gianavello. This is historically true.

PAGE 83.

Staggering into her husband's arms she fell.

An historical incident.

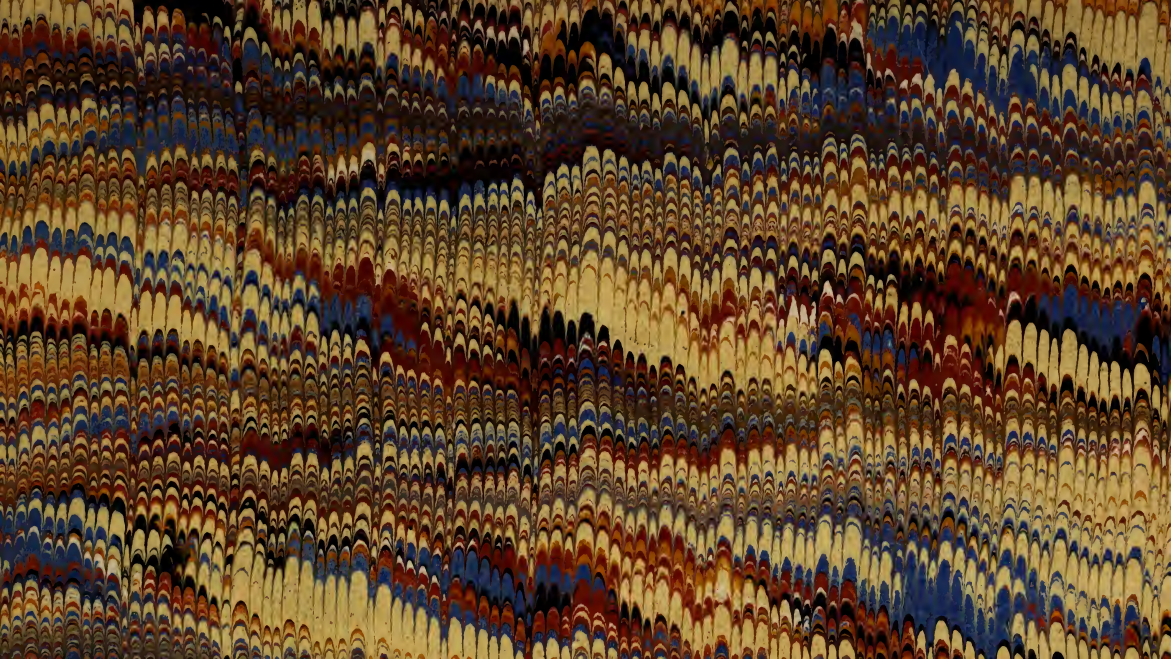
PAGE 84.

Our children wandering in their bowers.

Among the many cruelties practised on the Waldenses, few are more revolting than this. It was a common custom to kidnap their children, carry them off, educate them in the persuasion that their parents and kindred were heretics and rebels, and employ them finally in hunting down their unhappy countrymen.

PAGE 225.

Henry the Second at the Tomb of King Arthur.

This incident will be found recorded in Speed's History of England.

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